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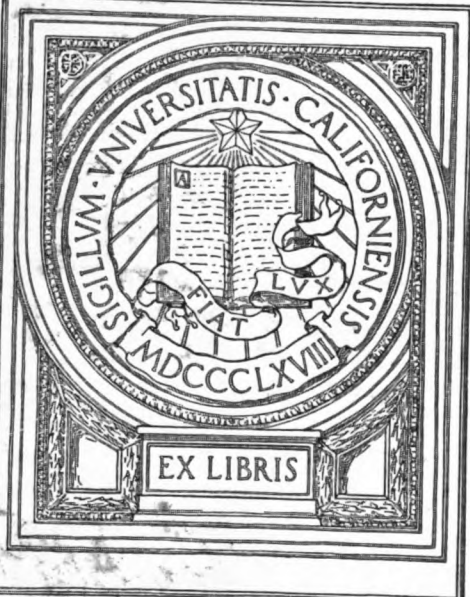
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STUDIES IN GERMAN  
VOL. V

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# The Concept of Nobility in German Didactic Literature of the Thirteenth Century

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND  
SCIENCES OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
SISTER MARY PAUL GOETZ, O. S. B.  
Atchison, Kansas.

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## PREFACE

The thirteenth century in Germany was a period of marked economic, religious, social, and moral transitions. Naturally, the writers of the time, poets, preachers, and educators, took a definite stand regarding the new developments and their works reflect their personal reactions. The didactic writers in particular are among those who record these changes most faithfully and a study of their writings proves both interesting and valuable from a cultural and historical point of view. Such a study this dissertation purposes to be. The investigation will include consideration of the place the nobleman was accorded in the general scheme of existence, his education and duties, his rights and privileges. Since the century witnessed the rise of the middle class, special attention will be paid to the influence which this social movement exerted upon the life of the nobles in general and upon the concept of nobility in particular.

In order to suggest the source of the ideal and the background against which it is to be projected, a survey has been made of the concept of nobility, beginning with Homeric times and noting the various influences which in the course of centuries contributed something to or changed the early Greek ideal of nobility. A lack of monographs dealing with specific periods renders impossible a more thorough treatment of the subject. The chapter represents, however, the author's own independent investigation of the sources mentioned. No other work has, as far as could be ascertained, followed the same line of research.

Of the literature of the thirteenth century the didactic works alone have been examined. Epical romances and other writings not of a strictly didactical nature have not been considered. The texts selected for investigation are: the *Winsbecke* and the *Winsbeckin*, the *Wälsche Gast* of Thomasin of Zerclaere, Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*, and the *Renner* of Hugo of Trimberg. These works were chosen because of their highly representative character, reflecting, as they do in a very striking manner, the point of view of the period.

During the past years valuable contributions have been made towards a better understanding and appreciation of the didactic

writers;<sup>1</sup> but, aside from scattered references to the social, ethical, and religious aspects of nobility in studies concerning the ethical teaching of the didactic writers,<sup>2</sup> no comprehensive investigation of this subject has been made. Friedrich Vogt, in his *Rektoratsrede, Der Bedeutungswandel des Wortes edel* (Marburg, 1909), traced the historical development of the term *edel*, with a slight emphasis on the didactic writings, but he ignored almost entirely the social and religious side of the problem. Gustav Neckel in an excellent article, *Adel und Gefolgschaft*,<sup>3</sup> investigated early Germanic nobility from a philological point of view. The political and legal aspects of the problem of nobility in Germany have also been treated by prominent historians,<sup>4</sup> though no definite conclusions have been

<sup>1</sup> Moriz Haupt, Albert Leitzmann, Hans-Friedrich Rosenfeld, and S. Anholt concerned themselves principally with *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin*; Hans Teske supplied the latest information regarding Thomasin von Zerclaere and his work, *Der Wälsche Gast*. Unfortunately, Friedrich Neumann died before he was able to publish his promised "Freidankstudien" and a new edition of Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*; his two articles, however, "Freidanks Lehre von der Seele," *Festschrift Max H. Jellinek* (Wien und Leipzig, 1928), 86-96, and "Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* 49-50 (1922), 388-404, contribute much toward a better understanding of this writer. The most prominent scholar in the field of medieval German literature in general and the didactic writers in particular is Gustav Ehrismann. Besides his history of medieval German literature (the 4th volume dealing with the didactic writers has not yet appeared), and a number of learned articles, his critical edition of Hugo of Trimberg's *Renner* is still unsurpassed.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. L. Behrendt, *The ethical teaching of Hugo of Trimberg*, Diss. (Washington, 1926), ch. IV, 36-39. F. Götting, *Der Renner Hugos von Trimberg* (Münster i. W., 1932), 104-114; H. Teske, *Thomasin von Zerclaere* (Heidelberg, 1933), 207 f.; J. Goldfriedrich, "Die religiösen und ethischen Grundanschauungen in Freidanks *Bescheidenheit*," *ZfDeutschk.* 13 (1899), 376-427, but especially G. Ehrismann, "Die Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems," *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 137-216.

<sup>3</sup> *PBB.* 41 (1916), 385-436.

<sup>4</sup> The most important of them are: K. Maurer, *Über das Wesen des ältesten Adels der deutschen Stämme* (München, 1846); P. Gierke, *Rechtsgeschichte der deutschen Genossenschaft*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1868-1913); H. Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. I, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1906), vol. II, 2nd ed. by C. Fr. v. Schwerin (Leipzig, 1928); Philip Heck, *Die Gemeinfreien der Karolingischen Volksrechte* (Halle, 1900); *Die Standesgliederung der Sachsen im frühen Mittelalter* (Tübingen, 1927); A. Dopsch, *Wirtschaftliche und soziale Grundlagen der europäischen Kulturentwicklung*, 2nd ed. (Wien, 1924).



reached. No attempt is made in the present study to deal with the philological, legal, or political side of the problem. That task has been left to more competent scholars for final treatment, while the author has endeavored to approach the subject from the social, ethical, and religious angles.

This investigation of the personal ideals of the age should be of service to anyone interested in the problems of medieval culture and thought. The difficulty of achieving a fair representation of the religious background of medieval times has often been felt by non-Catholic writers. The evidence presented here may serve to show the extent to which religious thought influenced the life of the people, particularly that of the upper classes, and how the didactic writers strove to derive from an eclectic harmony of Pagan and Christian philosophies a rule of conduct for Christian nobility which measured natural virtue by the scale of supernatural values.

The writer wishes to express her gratitude first of all to Reverend Mother Lucy Dooly, O.S.B., and to her community for the opportunity of continuing her studies at the Catholic University of America. She is especially indebted to Doctor Leo Behrendt, who suggested the subject of this study and whose constant encouragement and unstinted assistance and direction have been invaluable. Sincere thanks are due to Professor Paul G. Gleis and the Reverend Doctor Aloysius K. Ziegler for the careful reading of the manuscript and many constructive criticisms. Grateful acknowledgment is also made of services received from the staff of the Library of Congress, from Doctor Rita Dielmann, from individual members of the writer's own community, and from fellow students at the University.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>ADB.</b>	Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie
<b>Arch. ög.</b>	Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte.
<b>CSEL.</b>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
<b>DVjschrLW.</b>	Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte.
<b>DWB.</b>	Deutsches Wörterbuch. H. Paul.
<b>GRM.</b>	Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift.
<b>JEGPh.</b>	Journal of English and Germanic Philology.
<b>LG.</b>	Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters. G. Ehrismann.
<b>MSB.</b>	Sitzungsberichte der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissen- schaften.
<b>MSD.</b>	Müllenhoff-Scherer-Denkmäler.
<b>Neue Jahrb.</b>	Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Altertum, Ge- schichte und deutsche Literatur.
<b>PBB.</b>	Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur.
<b>PGr.</b>	Patrologia Graeca.
<b>PL.</b>	Patrologia Latina.
<b>Schmollers Jahrb.</b>	Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung Verwaltung und Volks- wirtschaft im Deutschen Reich. G. Schmoller.
<b>WSB.</b>	Wiener Sitzungsberichte.
<b>ZfdA.</b>	Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum.
<b>ZfDeutschk.</b>	Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde = Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht.
<b>ZfdPh.</b>	Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie.

## INTRODUCTION

Most German scholars are well acquainted with the writers upon whose works the present study is based. It has been thought necessary, however, to give a brief summary of the facts already known in order to inform the reader less familiar with this special field of German literature. Only those facts have been selected which are pertinent to the study itself and which will help to explain the individual views held by each particular writer on the subject of nobility.

The literature of the thirteenth century, which is mostly didactic, shows us the gradual decline of knighthood as well as the factors which brought about this change.<sup>1</sup> The representative didactic poems of the thirteenth century are the *Winsbecke* and the *Winsbeckin*, the *Wälsche Gast* of Thomasin of Zerclaere, Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*, and the *Renner* of Hugo of Trimberg. The religious-didactic purpose, which is uppermost in these writings, renders them somewhat unattractive as a whole when compared with epical romances. The free poetic fancy of the poets of chivalry is displaced by tedious moralizing. Realism enters poetry and discloses the fact that the world is far from being an ideal place. Men are falling short of their allotted tasks and the nobles especially, the mainstay of the old social order, are found wanting. Privileges pass out of their control and into the hands of an ambitious middle class. Their economic condition, rendered precarious by incessant strife, becomes pitiable. The writers, seeing the evil, wish to arrest the collapse before it is complete; therefore their zeal in denouncing the evil tendencies which are making themselves felt.

The *Winsbecke* and the *Winsbeckin*, two didactic poems of the early thirteenth century,<sup>2</sup> show us knighthood at its best. The

<sup>1</sup> Walter Rehm says: "... solche Übergangszeiten, in denen das Alte ausklingt und das Neue antönt, greifen gerne, um sich auszudrücken, zur Satire und zur Didaktik."—"Kulturverfall und spätmittelhochdeutsche Didaktik," *ZfdPh.* 52 (1927), 304.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Leitzmann, who supplied the latest edition of both poems (1928), places the date in the second decade of the thirteenth century. *Of. Intr.*, XXIV.—The *Winsbeckin* was written somewhat later by a different author on the analogy of the *Winsbecke*. *Of. ibid.*, XX.

father in the *Winsbecke* gives instructions to his son concerning the duties of a true knight, while the mother in the *Winsbeckin* admonishes her daughter to become a model of perfect womanhood. The original titles of the poems were probably *Des vater lêre* and *Der muoter lêre*.<sup>3</sup> This was a favorite form of moral textbook following the model of the *Disticha Catonis*.

Leitzmann believes that the poem, as we now possess it, was the work of three writers. The original draft, he says, included only stanzas 1-56; and the continuation, stanzas 57-80, he attributes to two writers, of whom the first composed stanzas 57-64, and the second, stanzas 65-80. The *Winsbeckin*, of a somewhat later date, but probably written before the continuations, is a companion poem to the old *Winsbecke*, and the work of an inferior author.<sup>4</sup>

We are mostly concerned with the original poem, stanzas 1-56. The author, a knight of Winsbach, belonged to a noble family, whose ancestral castle was located in the little town of Winsbach a few miles south of Nürnberg, and whose coat of arms contained three golden suns in a blue field. Members of this house are mentioned in several documents from about the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century, but the real identity of the poet is still disputed.<sup>5</sup> Leitzmann holds that he was a secular noble, not a clergyman as Haupt was inclined to believe,<sup>6</sup> and that he had a son for whom he wrote or whom he at least had in mind when he wrote his poem.<sup>7</sup> The fact that the author was a nobleman explains his familiarity with knightly customs as well as the complete absence of any reference to other classes, since the nobility, in general, had but little understanding of social problems.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXIV.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XX.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXII f., and *ADB*. 43 (1898), 461. — For further reference see A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* IV (Leipzig, 1903), 539, note 4; A. Leitzmann, *PBB*. 13 (1888), 248; E. Wilken, *Germania* 17 (1872), 410.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Göttingische Gelehrte Anz.* (1847), 1, 374.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Intr.*, XXIII. See also H. Denicke, *Die mittelalterlichen Lehrgedichte Winsbecke und Winsbeckin in kulturgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung* (Rixdorf, 1900), 17.

A somewhat different spirit manifests itself in the work entitled *Der Wälsche Gast*, written by Thomasin of Zerclaere, a canon at the cathedral of Aquileja, in the year 1215-1216.<sup>8</sup> The title implies that the poem was sent by its Italian author into German lands as a "guest." Thomasin calls himself a *walich*, a foreigner, *von Friule geborn*.<sup>9</sup>

The family of the Zerclaere,<sup>10</sup> which is mentioned in a number of documents, belonged to the rich merchant class and was one of the first families to engage in trade between Friuli and Venice. We know little of Thomasin's own life, his work supplying almost the only source of information. He went to school (*Wälsche Gast* 12256), but not to a university, as Teske points out.<sup>11</sup> He probably attended the cathedral school of his native town or that of Aquileja, where he became familiar with the *septem artes* and later with theology. Around 1200, when about 14 years of age, Thomasin visited a court in Upper Italy, where Provençal literature and customs attracted his attention.<sup>12</sup> A few years later he himself attempted to write two love poems in the Provençal tongue, following therein the fashion of the times.<sup>13</sup> When in 1204 Wolfger of Ellenbrechtskirchen, bishop of Passau, became patriarch of Aquileja, Thomasin returned home and entered the service of the patriarch.<sup>14</sup> The latter, a feudal noble, was a vassal of the German emperor and the greatest landowner in his own domain, the Mark Friuli. His possessions included even vast portions of Carniola and Istria, many of whose nobles owed allegiance to him.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> H. Teske, *Thomasin von Zerclaere* (Heidelberg, 1933), 117.

<sup>9</sup> *Wälsche Gast*, ed. by H. Rückert (Quedlinburg u. Leipzig, 1852), 69 ff. — Joseph v. Zahn believes him to be German. *Cf. Arch. ÖG.* 57 (1879), 348, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Cf.* H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 42-49.

<sup>11</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 51 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 58-79.

<sup>13</sup> See H. Teske's account of the two "Ensenhamens," *op. cit.*, 79 ff.

<sup>14</sup> H. Teske says that Thomasin came to his court probably in 1205, when not yet twenty years of age. *Cf. op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 3. "Im Jahre 1077 schenkte Heinrich IV. dem Patriarchen Sigehard von Aquileja den comitatus Forojulii und kurz darauf Istrien und Krain." V. Hasenöhl, "Deutschlands südöstliche Marken im 10., 11. und 12. Jahrhunderte," *Arch. ÖG.* 82 (1895), 543. — Concerning Wolfger, see

The nobility of this southeast corner of the empire was overwhelmingly German. Most of the lords and *ministeriales* had come from German houses and received fiefs from the patriarch, who needed a strong nobility to protect the borders and to make safe the trade between Germany and Venice. A chain of castles, built by German nobles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, bordered the eastern frontier of the patriarchate. The west and southwest were similarly protected. German nobles were everywhere and the patriarch was their highest suzerain.<sup>16</sup>

Wolfger, an able diplomat and powerful ruler, loved to surround himself with men of talent. Walther von der Vogelweide was often seen at his court,<sup>17</sup> and Buoncompagno, the great Florentine scholar, served the patriarch for a number of years,<sup>18</sup> together with a native of Friuli, Thomasin of Zerclaere.

It is not certain what position Thomasin filled. According to G. Grion,<sup>19</sup> he died as a canon of Aquileja. While silent as to his occupation, Thomasin tells us, that he had witnessed the coronation of Otto IV, and had spent more than eight weeks at the emperor's court (10471 ff). He is likewise well acquainted with the political troubles of the time, especially in so far as they affect his native land. The rise of the cities causes him great anxiety. He fears that they will wrest the power from the old feudal nobles and bring anarchy to Friuli as they have done to the rest of Italy.

Paul Kalkoff, *Wolfger von Passau, 1191-1204, eine Untersuchung über den historischen Wert seiner „Reiserechnungen“* (Weimar, 1882); R. Schwemer, *Innocenz III und die deutsche Kirche während des Thronstreites von 1198-1208* (Strassburg, 1882), 98 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 30 ff.; K. Burdach, *Walther von der Vogelweide I* (Leipzig, 1900), 55-81; *Vorspiel I*, 1 (Halle, 1925), 350-379; Anton E. Schönbach, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesanges* (Graz, 1898), 33; 63 f.; H. Sparnaay, "Zu Walthers 'Drier slahte sanc'," *Neophilologus* 19 (1934), 105 f.

<sup>18</sup> At least between 1204 and 1220. Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 34 ff.; K. Burdach, *Walther von der Vogelweide I*, 290 ff.; *Vorspiel I*, 1, 355; A. E. Schönbach, *WSB.* 145 (1902), 11 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Article "Fridanc," *ZfdPh.* 2 (1870), 431. H. Teske says: "Er wird regulierter Domherr zu Aquileja. Gottesdienst und Predigt liegen ihm ob." *Op. cit.*, 216. On the same question see A. E. Schönbach, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesanges*, 36 ff.

He partly blames the nobles for this state of affairs, and, in his anxiety to remedy the evil, he writes a work of 14742 verses addressed to nobles and clergy to bring them back to their duties. He uses the German language because those for whom it is intended are German knights. He himself says that he writes not *durch kurzweile*, but

durch nôt, wan ich sihe wol  
daz man nien tuot daz man sol. (12289 f.)

He could not longer endure to see the world, and especially those around him, the upper classes, failing so lamentably in their obligations. Though it was hard for him to forego the pleasures of society,<sup>20</sup> he shut himself up for ten months in order to write his work. According to him, the root of all evil in the world is *unstaete*, i. e., instability of character, while *staete*, or steadfastness, is the fountainhead of all virtues.<sup>21</sup>

He hopes that his book will be well received despite some mistakes which he is prone to make on account of his being a foreigner and not so well versed in German. How gratefully his work was accepted is shown by the many, often richly illuminated, manuscripts which have been preserved.<sup>22</sup> Burdach mentions eighteen manuscripts of the poem, three of which belong to the thirteenth, five to the fourteenth, and ten to the fifteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

The very personality of the author of the *Wälsche Gast* makes the work important for the study of nobility. He is an Italian and a *ministerialis*, descended from a family which has risen through trade. His native Friuli is ruled by German nobles, who follow German feudal customs and who are watching with anxiety the rise of Italian city-states. Thomasin as a man of Friuli speaks against Venetian influence, and as an aristocrat treats the lower

“ mich luste harte wol ze schouwen  
beidiu ritter unde vrouwen, *Wälsche Gast*, 12319 f.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of the work see F. Ranke, “Sprache und Stil im Wälschen Gast des Thomasin von Cirlcaria,” *Palaestra* 68 (Berlin, 1908), 162-170.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. v. Öchelhäuser, *Der Bilderkreis zum Wälschen Gast* (Heidelberg, 1890); A. Hessel, “Friaul als Grenzland,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 134 (1926), 8.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Vorspiel* I, 2, p. 109.

classes only in relation to the ruling class, the feudal aristocracy. He becomes a member of the clerical profession and takes his duties seriously.<sup>24</sup> But his youthful contact with Provençal life and ideals still colors his later work and gives to the *Wälsche Gast* a certain air of courtliness.

The courtly atmosphere is less pronounced in Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*, a collection of terse, epigrammatic sayings, which enjoyed great popularity for several centuries.<sup>25</sup> The moral proverbs which it contained were in later centuries widely used by popular preachers and incorporated in the *Proverbia Fridanci*, or Freidank sermons of the first quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Little is known of the author's life except that he took part in the crusade in 1228,<sup>27</sup> and that he wrote his work in all probability between 1215 and 1230.<sup>28</sup> Hauck believes that he belonged to the nobility,<sup>29</sup> but the general tone of his work is democratic.

As the century draws to a close, realistic tendencies become more pronounced. They find expression especially in the *Renner* of Hugo of Trimberg. The author was a schoolmaster in Teuerstadt,

<sup>24</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 216 f.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. W. Grimm, "Fridankes Bescheidenheit," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 1 (1835), 404. The edition by Fr. Sandvoss is followed in all citations.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. Klapper, "Die Sprichwörter der Freidankpredigten. Proverbia Fridanci. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des ostmitteldeutschen Sprichworts und seiner Lateinischen Quellen," *Wort und Brauch*, 16 (Breslau, 1927). See also a review by Richard Jente in *JEGPh.* 28 (1929), 142-144.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. H. E. Bezzenberger, *Fridankes Bescheidenheit* (Halle, 1872), 18. — The home of Freidank is a much disputed question. O. v. Zingerle tried to prove that the author in all probability lived in the neighborhood of Bruneck in Tyrol. Cf. "Die Heimat des Dichters Freidank," *ZfdPh.* 52 (1927), 93-110. Other writers would place him in Alsace; cf. H. E. Bezzenberger, *op. cit.*, 18; Fr. Sandvoss, *Fridank*, 250 f.; R. Krauss, *Schwäbische Literaturgeschichte* (Freiburg i. B., 1897-99), I, 44, speaks of him as a Swabian writer. Gervinus places him in the Upper Rhine region; cf. *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, 5th ed. (Leipzig, 1871), II, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Neumann says: "Die Sprüche gehören in das erste Drittel des XIII Jahrhunderts. Nichts weist in ihnen unter das Jahr 1230." — "Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* 49-50 (1922), 391, n. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* IV, 540, n. 3. F. Pfeiffer tries to prove that he belonged to the middle class. Cf. *Germania* 2 (1857), 129-163.



a village on the outskirts of Bamberg.<sup>30</sup> His verses present a picture of society in which the relationships of all classes, the high and the low, ecclesiastical and lay, men and women, are portrayed in their most intimate aspects. The descriptions are so full and touch upon so many problems of society that they illumine not only the civilization of the time, but also cast considerable light upon the preceding and the following periods. Besides the *Renner*, Hugo wrote several Latin works, the *Registrum multorum auctorum*, *Solsequium*, *Laurea Sanctorum*, and, perhaps, a *Vita Maria Rhythmica*, and seven German poems which have, however, been lost.<sup>31</sup> The *Renner* was written between the years 1280 and 1313,<sup>32</sup> and portrays as few other works of the time, the change in German social life and ideals which had taken place in the course of the century.

Hugo was an old man when he wrote the *Renner*,<sup>33</sup> and the tendency of advanced age to criticize the young generation is felt throughout the voluminous work. He was born in East Franconia and was well educated, though he never attended a university.<sup>34</sup> Besides being an exceptional Latin scholar, he also may have possessed some knowledge of Greek.<sup>35</sup> His enthusiasm for learning prompted him to collect a library consisting of two hundred *büechelin*, a rather expensive investment for a poor man like Hugo.<sup>36</sup> His great erudition granted him access to the upper classes of society.

The social texture of Franconia was like that of the rest of Germany in the thirteenth century—a warlike feudal and ecclesiastical aristocracy lording it over a servile peasantry. Hugo was not in sympathy with the life of the nobles. He had seen much

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Behrendt, *The ethical teaching of Hugo of Trimberg*, Diss. (Washington, 1926), 18. For a good discussion of the realism of this period see Ch. F. Fiske, "Homely Realism in Mediaeval German Literature," *Vassar Mediaeval Studies* (New Haven, 1923), 111-147.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. L. Behrendt, *op. cit.*, ch. I, 5-15.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 5 f.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Renner* 10494, where he tells us that he is 77.

<sup>34</sup> For further information regarding his education and scholarship see L. Behrendt, *op. cit.*, 16-23.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 16 f.

<sup>36</sup> Concerning his poverty see *ibid.*, 19 f.

of it and proposed to preach a sermon on the defections of humanity, exhorting nobles and clergy in particular to live up to the ideals of their calling.

The complaint about the evils of the time is one of the chief characteristics of the didactic literature of this period. The writers regret the loss of the good old times, when everything that is now wrong was right. They notice a decline and fight against it. Naturally, their zeal to preserve the old order of things leads them, on the one hand, to overemphasize the good conditions of the past, to paint them in brighter colors than the facts would warrant; and, on the other, to exaggerate the faults and shortcomings of their own times. Freidank realizes this when he says:

Swâ man lobet die alten site,  
dâ schiltet man die niuwen mite.      (52, 8 f.)

That does not prevent him, however, from doing it himself, and we find the same to be true with the other writers.<sup>37</sup>

It must also be remembered that the didactic poets were true children of their time and borrowed from all kinds of sources without troubling themselves, in most instances, to indicate the original author. Thomasin's attitude is characteristic of all didactic writers. That he holds plagiarism no literary sin is stated clearly in his own justification of his borrowings:

daz ist untugende niht,  
ob ouch mir lîhte geschiht  
daz ich in mîns getihtes want  
ein holz daz ein ander hant  
gemeistert habe lege mit list,  
daz es gelîch den andern ist.      (109 ff.)

Classical authors were held in great esteem. The didactic writers frequently drew from them in order to give force, emphasis, and classic coloring to their own convictions. Hugo of Trimberg defends his practice of quoting from non-Christian sources and points out that a prudent man can learn much from their perusal.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Walther Rehm says: "Immer wird, subjectiv oder objectiv, an einem Ideal der Ablauf des Geschehens und die eigene Zeit gemessen und danach von Höhe oder Verfall gesprochen," *loc. cit.*, 298.

<sup>38</sup>      Der heiden sprûche habent ouch êre  
Und sint manigen enden wert  
Als wahs, dâ man niht honiges gert.

He holds that virtuous pagan authors are, after Holy Scripture, of great benefit to clergy as well as to laymen. They must not, however, be preferred to Holy Scripture. Hugo refers here to St. Jerome's youthful preference for Cicero and other Roman authors,

An den unsers herren lop niht was: (8464),

and to the Saint's famous dream, when he first embraced a life of extreme asceticism.<sup>39</sup>

Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Sallust, Juvenal, Ovid, Horace, Lucan, as well as numerous other classical authors, were well known to the didactic writers and are often mentioned by them. It is doubtful, however, if they came into direct contact with the originals. The probability is, that even if they cite an author verbally and give his name, as is the case at times with Hugo, the quotation is, more often than not, taken from an intermediate source. Their knowledge of ancient writers came to them principally through their school-books, which were collections of accepted aphorisms and quotations from the ancients, interspersed with Christian thoughts from the Bible and the Fathers.

Their acquaintance with Holy Scripture and the Fathers may have been made in the same way, although in some instances the writers probably had access to the original texts. Thomasin,<sup>40</sup> Freidank,<sup>41</sup> and Hugo<sup>42</sup> show great familiarity with patristic and

Swer sich nu wol verrihten kan  
 Ūz disen zwein, der werfe hin dan,

Swaz er vinde daz im niht füege; Renner 24509 ff.;

cf. also 24548 ff.; 16275 f., and E. J. Wölfel, "Untersuchungen über Hugo von Trimberg und seinen Renner," *ZfdA.* 28 (1884), 161. E. Seemann, "Hugo von Trimberg und die Fabeln seines Renners," *Münchener Archiv* 6 (1923), 4 ff. and 12 ff.; S. Sawicki, *Gottfried von Strassburg und die Poetik des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1932), 13 ff.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Renner 8460 ff., and E. Seemann, *loc. cit.*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 149 ff., 158-189; A. E. Schönbach, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesanges* (Graz, 1898), 39.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. C. Loewer, *Patristische Quellenstudien zu Freidanks Bescheidenheit*, Diss. (Leipzig, 1900); Fr. Neumann, "Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* (1922), 388-404 and by the same author, "Freidanks Lehre von der Seele," *Festschrift Max Jellinek* (Wien u. Leipzig, 1928), 86-96.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. F. Götting, *Der Renner Hugos von Trimberg* (Münster i. W., 1932); E. J. Wölfel, *loc. cit.*, 162; H. Kissling, *Die Ethik Frauenlobs* (Halle, 1926), 5.

later Latin writings, such as the works of Pope Gregory, Isidor of Seville, St. Bernard, Alain of Lille, Vincent of Beauvais, Hugh of St. Victor, John of Salisbury, and others.

The best known and most popular collections of the time were the *Moralis Philosophia* ascribed to Guillaume de Conches, the *Disticha Catonis*, an accumulation of ethical maxims with specific reference to conduct, compiled by a Latin *rhetor* before the end of the third century, and the *Summa virtutum et vitiorum* of Guilielmus Peraldus († 1275).<sup>43</sup>

The *Moralis Philosophia* formed an important gateway through which ancient philosophy entered medieval thought and teaching. Here we find combined the maxims of Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, Horace, Boethius, Terence, and Lucan, as well as a few citations from Isidore and St. Gregory.<sup>44</sup> Guillaume de Conches, the supposed author of the treatise,<sup>45</sup> lived between 1080 and 1154 (or 1150).<sup>46</sup> The frame of his work is supplied by Cicero's *De officiis*. Following his model, he divides the work into five principal parts: *De honesto*, *De comparatione honestorum*, *De utili*, *De comparatione utilium*, and finally, *De conflictu honesti et utilis*.<sup>47</sup> He approaches the question of nobility in Part III, and numbers it

<sup>43</sup> Cf. L. Behrendt, *op. cit.*, 9, and E. Schröder, "Die Summe der Tugenden und Laster," *ZfdA.* 29 (1885), 359 f. A good account of medieval books will be found in Ch. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1927), 70-91. — See also A. E. Schönbach, *Walther von der Vogelweide*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1895), 161 f.

<sup>44</sup> Zingerle gives a compilation of the various citations in *MSB.*, phil.-hist. Kl. (1881), 302 ff. A complete and correct summary is supplied by J. Holmberg in his edition (Uppsala, 1929), 9, n. 3. This edition will be used for further references.

<sup>45</sup> J. Holmberg takes up the problem of authorship and after examining internal as well as external evidence, he concludes: "Die verfasserschaft des Guillaume de Conches wird durch diese übereinstimmungen, wenn nicht gesichert, so doch jedenfalls wahrscheinlich gemacht." *Op. cit.*, Introduction, 7. John R. Williams says that on account of the uncertain data with regard to authorship, the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* "should not be unreservedly ascribed to anyone."—"The Authorship of the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum*," *Speculum* 6 (1931), 411. For the sake of convenience, Guillaume de Conches will be referred to in the present study as the possible author.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. J. Holmberg, *op. cit.*, 8 and note 2 for further bibliography.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

among the goods of the body.<sup>48</sup> Cicero,<sup>49</sup> Horace,<sup>50</sup> Sallust,<sup>51</sup> and especially Juvenal<sup>52</sup> are his sources. The Christian concept does not enter in. The first part, the *De honesto*, treats of the four cardinal virtues and their *filiae*, which became the foundation for the ethical system of knighthood.<sup>53</sup> Thomasin in particular is greatly indebted to this treatise. It supplies the frame for his first book and many of his thoughts can be traced directly to it.<sup>54</sup>

As other possible Latin sources might be mentioned: the *Moribus et vita quisquis vult esse facetus*,<sup>55</sup> and the *Facetus cum nihil utilius*,<sup>56</sup> both containing rules for good conduct; a short Latin poem called *De statibus mundi*,<sup>57</sup> the author of which chastises severely the different classes of society, but especially the clergy, for their avarice and their delight in lustful pleasures; finally, another Latin poem of greater length, written about 1220, and called *Sermones nulli parcentes*.<sup>58</sup> Hugo of Trimberg seems to have been very familiar with this last poem, a German translation of which was made about 1276.<sup>59</sup> The unknown author of the poem deplores in twenty-eight chapters the evils of the time, charging each class with its particular shortcomings. He begins with the pope and includes all the ecclesiastical ranks, monks and nuns, emperor, kings and princes, knights and citizens, merchants, farmers, and women.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 54, 8. Ehrismann suggests that it properly should belong to the advantages of fortune. Cf. "Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems," *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 143, n. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *De off.*, I, 34, 121.

<sup>50</sup> *Epod.* IV, 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Jug.* LXXXV, 22-23; *Catil.* LI, 12.

<sup>52</sup> *Sat.* X, 297; VIII, 20; 24; 30-32; 76; 140-141; 269-271.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. G. Ehrismann, *loc. cit.*, 142.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. A. E. Schönbach, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesanges*, 41, and H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Ed. by A. Morel-Fatio in *Romania* 15 (1886), 224-235.

<sup>56</sup> Ed. by C. Schröder, *Palaestra* 86 (Berlin, 1911).

<sup>57</sup> The exact date and author are not certain. It has been attributed to both Gautier de Chatillon and Walter Mapes. Cf. R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1933), 21 f.

<sup>58</sup> The original and a German translation are edited by M. v. Karajan in *ZfdA.* 2 (1842), 15-45.

<sup>59</sup> Karajan calls the translation *Buch der Rügen*.

Aside from epical romances, French as well as German, which were known to the didactic poets, there are several French poems, with which the didactic writers may have been familiar, judging from the similarity of subject matter and treatment. A Cistercian monk, Hélinant, who is supposed to have written *Les Vers de la mort* about the year 1194,<sup>60</sup> speaks of the power of death over all mankind. Another French writer, Étienne de Fougères († 1178), wrote *Le Livre des manières* about 1174,<sup>61</sup> in which he furnishes rich information concerning the conditions of the various classes of society. He discusses their duties and notes their failures. *La Bible Guiot*, written probably before 1209 by Guiot de Provins,<sup>62</sup> mirrors the faults of all mankind. The author has much to say about monastic orders and the corruption of nobility. A young Burgundian knight, Huges of Berzé-le-Châtel, wrote a similar poem, somewhat later, entitled: *La Bible au Seigneur de Berzé*.<sup>63</sup> The author begins with praising the good old times and then turns to the evil conditions of his own age, especially among the knights. Another Norman cleric, Guillaume, wrote *Le Besant de Dieu*,<sup>64</sup> in which he presents the conflict of vice and virtue in the world. The *Roman de carité* and *Roman de misere* of the Recluse of Molliens<sup>65</sup> are fashioned on the same style. The poet seeks charity everywhere but cannot find it. He has much to say about the vices of the rich. Robert de Blois in his *L'Enseignement des princes*, written about 1260,<sup>66</sup> discusses the pride of the lords, the avarice of the clergy, and the arrogance of the serf who is not satisfied with his position.

Besides the literature mentioned above, there were also a considerable number of German poems, most of them of a religious-didactic nature, contemporary with or preceding the didactic poems

<sup>60</sup> Cf. R. Mohl, *op. cit.*, 34 f.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 35 f.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 37 f. The poem is found in *Les Oeuvres de Guiot de Provins*, ed. by J. Orr (Manchester, 1915), 10-93.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. R. Mohl, *op. cit.*, 39 f.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 40 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 42 ff.; they are edited by A.-G. Van Hamel, *Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études*, 61 (Paris, 1885).

<sup>66</sup> Ed. by J. Ulrich, *Sämmtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1889-95), III.—Cf. also R. Mohl, *op. cit.*, 44.

of this study.<sup>67</sup> It is impossible here to go into detail with regard to the sources. What has been said should be sufficient to indicate the various influences which affected the concept of nobility of the didactic writers of the thirteenth century. In them we find a fusion of classical and Christian thought, colored, to some extent, by Romance views, but presenting, after all, the writers' own opinions, since they made their borrowings according to their individual ideals.

There is also a great interdependence among the didactic writers themselves. Freidank is familiar with the *Winsbecke* <sup>68</sup> and knows and uses the *Wälsche Gast* of Thomasin of Zerclaere,<sup>69</sup> while Hugo of Trimberg borrows extensively from Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*.<sup>70</sup> Although their reliability as historical sources is thus greatly restricted, their testimony is, nevertheless, of great value. Because each author observes the same weaknesses, the same symptoms of decline, their reiterations lend force to one another until their writings blend into an historical voice of so great importance that it may not be denied a hearing.<sup>71</sup> Their complaint is not the cry of a certain class, since these writers were widely separated in social position: the author of the *Winsbecke* was an accomplished nobleman; Freidank, evidently a member of the lower nobility; Thomasin, a theologian and scholar; and Hugo of Trimberg, a man of the middle class. It is very suggestive that even Hugo, the biographer *par excellence* of the bourgeoisie, is anxious to preserve the old conditions. He cannot think of a new order which would work as well as the old. In all likelihood, this hesitancy was due to a feeling that the middle class was not yet ready to assume the lead.

<sup>67</sup> A list of them is given by L. Behrendt, *op. cit.*, 10, n. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. H. E. Bezzenberger, *op. cit.*, 44.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 43; Fr. Neumann, *loc. cit.*, 391 and H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 87. See, however, F. Pfeiffer, *Germania* 2 (1857), 150.

<sup>70</sup> A. Leitzmann gives a complete list of Hugo's borrowings from Freidank. Cf. "Die Freidankcitate im Renner," *PBB.* 45 (1920), 116-120. An incomplete list is given by K. Janicke, *Germania* 2 (1857), 418-424.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. W. Rehm, *loc. cit.*, 309. Opposed to this view is J. Petersen, "Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe," *Quellen u. Forschungen* 106 (Strassburg, 1909), 6 ff., and 163 f.; Petersen is correct in so far as accumulative testimony often fails to establish historical accuracy, but it is valuable as an indication of the general trend of thought for the period in question.

## CHAPTER I

### A SURVEY OF THE CONCEPT OF NOBILITY TO THE YEAR 1200

Nobility is a term which covers an accumulated array of abstractions. It is impossible to arrive at a complete, unambiguous, and generally acceptable definition. The concept has varied with time and place. Poets and philosophers, lawyers and statesmen have their individual interpretations, and this again differs from one nation to another and ever changes as time goes on. But despite this internal evolution, the ideal basis remains the same. Nobility, in whatever guise it appears, always spells excellence. Now it refers to excellence of character, again it indicates position in society. A reconciliation of the various types of nobility is thus made possible through this common bond. The ancient Greeks, in fact, believed that true nobility consists in a complete harmony of physical and moral excellence with social supremacy.

Homer, in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,<sup>1</sup> gives us the first picture of the Greek noble, and it is this picture which Aristotle seems to have in mind when in his philosophical works he outlines for us the qualities of true nobility.<sup>2</sup>

A nobleman in the Homeric Age must first of all be such by birth. This implied a connection with the gods, who were considered the ancestors of every princely house.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, too,

<sup>1</sup> W. Dörpfeld dates them in the 12th century B. C. Cf. *Homers Odyssee* (München, 1925), I, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle's conception of nobility is an ideal one, just as is his conception of state. He does not give us a true picture of the nobility of the time, but tells us how it ought to be. For a detailed description of early Greek nobility see L. R. Brandt, *Social aspects of Greek life in the sixth century B. C.*, Diss. Columbia Univ. (Philadelphia, 1921), ch. II, 29-43; J. Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin u. Stuttgart, 1898-1902, I, 170 ff.; J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, 2nd ed. (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1912-1927), I, 1, 17 ff.; 84 ff.; 213 ff.; G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* (Gotha, 1893-1904), II, 93 ff.; G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Greek view of life* (London, 1932), ch. II, 69-133.

<sup>3</sup> Nobility in Homer is always expressed by prefixing *dios* to the hero's name, as *dios 'Αχιλλεύς*, thus indicating divine descent. Cf. *Iliad* I, 7; I, 121; *et passim*. *διογενής* is also used in this connection. Cf. *Iliad* I, 489. Herodotus, however, makes fun of Hecataeus, who had traced his lineage



believes in a nobility of birth. He considers it as one of the external goods necessary to perfect happiness.<sup>4</sup> Athenian nobles were called *εὐγενεῖς* or the well-born.<sup>5</sup> At Aristotle's time, however, the earlier emphasis on noble birth had gradually weakened and that kind of nobility which owed its prestige more exclusively to wealth had gained prominence. But, Aristotle remarks, noble descent is still respected everywhere,<sup>6</sup> and honor is also due to the descendants, because, he concludes, it is reasonable to expect that men of worth will have children of equal merit.<sup>7</sup>

A beautifully organized body matching "a harmonious, well-balanced spirit and soul"<sup>8</sup> is another requisite for a Greek noble. Personal beauty is, according to Aristotle, indispensable to a perfect man,<sup>9</sup> and a well-balanced character is the foundation of Aristotelian "happiness." It is that virtue which avoids excess and deficiency,<sup>10</sup> the *μέτρον* already pointed out by Theognis<sup>11</sup> and frequently referred to by Aristotle.<sup>12</sup> In the Heroic Age, noble birth, beauty, and virtue<sup>13</sup> were still considered inseparable,<sup>14</sup> but

to a god in the sixteenth generation. Cf. *Herodotus* II, 143. How deeply the belief in divine descent was rooted in Greek nature is also proved by the example of Alexander, who considered himself the son of Zeus, without, however, denying Philip as his father. Cf. U. Wilken, *Alexander der Grosse* (Leipzig, 1931), 117 and 255.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I, viii, 16. The importance attached to noble birth appears strikingly in Sophocles, *Ajax* 1290.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* 8: 40. For further reference on the term, see G. Busolt, *op. cit.*, II, 94 f. and n. 5; also G. W. Botsford, *Hellenic History* (New York, 1922), 105.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* III, vii, 7; also Theognis, *Elegies* 409-410.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* III, vii, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ch. B. Gulick, *Modern traits in old Greek life* (New York, 1927), 90. The Greeks believed that a fine, healthy body was indicative also of strength of soul. Cf. *Iliad* III, 44 f., and G. Lowes Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 142 f.

<sup>9</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* I, viii, 16. Cf. also Plato, *Republic* 402.

<sup>10</sup> "μετρήεις τις ἀρα ἐστίν ἡ ἀρετὴ στοχαστικὴ γὰρ οὐδὰ τοῦ μέτρου." *Nicomachean Ethics* II, vi, 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Elegies* 335-336.

<sup>12</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* II, vi, 13; *et passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Virtue must be understood as a habit of right action, formed by acting rightly. Cf. *ibid.*, II, i, 4; *et passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Iliad* III, 44 f.

Theognis, with an eye for reality, knows that beauty and virtue fall to but few and calls those happy who have a share of both.<sup>15</sup> Virtue was considered the exclusive possession of those of noble descent, while those of low origin were thought to be incapable of performing virtuous acts. The Greek nobles called themselves ἀγαθοί or ἐσθλοί, "the good," and Theognis, a typical noble of the old social order, continually identifies the nobles with "the good,"<sup>16</sup> while he calls the commons, or rich commercial class, οἱ κακοί<sup>17</sup> or οἱ δειλοί,<sup>18</sup> "the base." This latter class had gradually gained recognition and in the course of time changed the original Greek conception of nobility.<sup>19</sup>

Wealth was always a determining factor in the life of a Greek noble, and, like honorable descent and superior bodily and mental endowments, a necessary qualification.<sup>20</sup> When Theognis and Aristotle speak against wealth, they do not mean ownership of land or inherited possessions,<sup>21</sup> but that new ruling class which had grown wealthy by commerce and was trying to force its way into positions of power even as early as the seventh century. The old nobility clung tenaciously to their ancient rights and privileges, and we hear their complaints in the laments of Theognis, who deploras the new order of things, and regrets that riches have corrupted birth.<sup>22</sup> Unrighteous gain has brought honor to those undeserving of it and

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Elegies* 933-938.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 279; *et passim*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; *et passim*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 281; *et passim*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. Busolt, *op. cit.*, II, 186 and 198.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, I, 173 f., and 175, note 1. Aristotle defines "good birth" as long standing wealth and virtue. "ἐγγενεῖά ἐστιν ἀρχαῖος πλοῦτος καὶ ἀρετή." *Politics* IV, vi, 5.

<sup>21</sup> The nobles in the Heroic Age were landholders. Attic placenames can be traced to certain families, whose possessions were located there, as for instance: Butadai, Thymoitadai, Perithoidai, etc. Cf. G. Busolt, *op. cit.*, II, 93 f.; in Syracuse the nobles were known as γεωμήτορες or "landholders"; cf. *Herodotus* VII, 155; also in Samos; cf. *Thucydides* VIII, 21. The Chalcidian nobles were called ἵπποβοῦται, i. e., "horse breeders"; cf. *Herodotus* V, 77. The keeping of horses was a distinguishing trait of nobility, determining to a certain degree the rank of the nobles. Cf. J. Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, I, 172; Aristotle, *Politics* VI, iii, 2. See also Th. D. Seymour, *Life in the Homeric Age* (New York, 1907), 247.

<sup>22</sup> *Elegies* 190. See also 53-58; 315-318; 525-526; 621-622; 699-700; 1117-1118.

lowered the standards of moral worth.<sup>23</sup> Only the "great-souled" (*μεγαλόψυχος*) man, declares Aristotle, is deserving of honor,<sup>24</sup> whereas those who possess the goods of fortune without virtue cannot claim high worth.<sup>25</sup>

The Greek conception of nobility is primarily aesthetic. The noble man is the beautiful man, beautiful in body and beautiful in soul. In order to produce and perpetuate such a combination he must be supplied with external advantages such as wealth, friends, and the like. Moreover, he cannot engage in manual labor or trade, since such occupations are held in bad repute. Plato believes that a life of drudgery disfigures the body and enervates the soul.<sup>26</sup> Aristotle calls the occupation of the artisan unnatural and denies to him excellence of any kind, rating him even below the slave as far as virtue is concerned.<sup>27</sup> The proper occupation for the "excellent" man is the performance of public duties. He is first of all a citizen of the state, and civic duties require the greater part of his time and energy. The productive class, on the other hand, realizes the means of subsistence; it exists simply to maintain the aristocracy of citizens. Aristotle's definition of the "happy" man, who is the ideal Greek noble, is: one whose activity accords with perfect virtue and who is adequately furnished with external goods, not for a casual period of time, but for a complete and perfect life-time.<sup>28</sup>

The Roman concept of nobility is illustrated best by the writings of Cicero, who, true Roman that he was, can be considered the exponent of the normal trend of Roman ideas. The Romans were an intensely practical people,<sup>29</sup> and it is not surprising, therefore, that even their ideal of nobility bears a certain utilitarian stamp.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 291-292; 635-636; 647-648. Aristotle denies to the nobles the right to engage in gainful professions (cf. *Politics* VII, viii, 2) and leaves the tilling of the soil to the serfs (*ibid.*, VII, ix, 9).

<sup>24</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, iii, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, iii, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Republic* 495, also Xenophon, *Oec.*, IV, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Politics* I, v, 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* I, x, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. W. W. Fowler, *Social life at Rome in the Age of Cicero* (New York, 1909), 187; A. Bömer, "Anstand und Etikette nach den Theorien der Humanisten," *Neue Jahrb.* 14 (1904), 224.

The Romans like the Greeks had a nobility of birth whose earliest representatives were the patricians.<sup>30</sup> In their relation to the plebeians they formed a real aristocracy of birth. A person born of a patrician family was and remained a patrician, no matter what his later fortunes might be. No power could make a patrician a plebeian. The vast gulf between the two classes was bridged only after a long and serious struggle, which lasted until the third century B. C., and secured for the plebeians political equality.<sup>31</sup> The outcome was a new nobility, distinct from the old patriciate and composed of those who had held curule offices and were members of the senate.<sup>32</sup> The first man who obtained a curule office became a *novus homo*,<sup>33</sup> or the *auctor generis*, that is, with him began the nobility of the family.<sup>34</sup>

Theoretically, personal merit could raise a man to the rank of nobility and Cicero was one of those *qui non in cunabulis, sed in campo sunt consules facti*.<sup>35</sup> But in reality name and renown of ancestors were more potent factors for the obtaining of offices than

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the various views and arguments regarding this class, see G. W. Botsford, *The Roman Assemblies* (New York, 1909), 16-45.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 309 and 330; and W. E. Heitland, *The Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 1909), I, 118.

<sup>32</sup> Roman nobility from a political and social point of view is treated by M. Gelzer, *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1912), and F. Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (Stuttgart, 1920).

<sup>33</sup> Cicero refers to this practice in his *De lege agraria* II, 1-4, where he calls himself *primum hominum novum*, being elected consul by the people on account of his merit, not because of his birth.

<sup>34</sup> Concerning this nobility, A. W. Becker says: "wer einmal mit der höchsten Gewalt bekleidet gewesen war, der war für immer über die Menge erhoben, und sehr natürlich ging auch sein persönliches Ansehen auf seine Nachkommen über. Er hatte sein Geschlecht geadelt, und so bildete sich, wie früher innerhalb des patricischen Standes, von selbst ohne gesetzlich anerkanntes Institut des Staats zu werden, an der Stelle, oder vielmehr neben dem immer gleichgültiger werdenden Geburtsadel ein Amtsadel, der aber forterbend in den Familien eben auch wieder zu einer Art Geburtsadel wurde, und nach und nach zu einer compacten Körperschaft sich gestaltete, welche die höchste Gewalt ebenso exclusiv, wie früher die Patricier, als ihr Eigentum betrachtete." *Handbuch der römischen Alterthümer* (Leipzig, 1843-44), II, 1, p. 219. Cf. W. E. Heitland, *op. cit.*, I, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Cicero, *De lege agraria* II, 100.

the personality of the man.<sup>36</sup> The *nobiles* tried to keep honorary positions as much as possible in their own families,<sup>37</sup> and thus little chance was given to men of real worth. But the ideal remained, and Cicero constantly refers to it, emphasizing the superiority of moral nobility over nobility of birth.<sup>38</sup> This moral nobility or *honestum*, he says, is not within the reach of all but is the possession of a few and is only recognized by a few. The common people have the mistaken notion that the rich, the prosperous, and those of noble birth are to be considered the best.<sup>39</sup> Nobility of birth, however, is by no means identical with moral excellence, though illustrious ancestors reinforce the shining virtues of a man,<sup>40</sup> while the man of humble birth must rely on his own virtue and superior ability.<sup>41</sup> If fortune<sup>42</sup> favors a man with noble descent, he is, as it were, placed upon a pillar and his deeds are noticed by all.<sup>43</sup>

Cicero places the greatest emphasis on *virtue* as possessing the sole claim to distinction. But it must be public virtue, that is, conspicuous personal merit and ability shown in actions beneficial to the state. Cicero's highest ideal is a perfect citizen.<sup>44</sup> For such

<sup>36</sup> Cicero is very indignant in his speech against Piso whom his family busts had raised to his office. Cf. *In Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio* 1-3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*; also *De lege agraria* II, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Ep. fam.*, III, 7, 5; *Post reditum in senatu* 25; also *De off.*, I, 121; II, 36, 43.

<sup>39</sup> "opulentos homines et copiosos, tum genere nobili natos esse optimos putant." Cicero, *De re publica* I, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Pro Cn. Plancio* 87.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, and *Philippio* VI, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Cicero numbers noble birth among the gifts of fortune. Cf. *De off.*, I, 115. It belonged like wealth and repute to the accidents of individual men, which were looked upon by the Stoics as "the dispensations of Providence, results of the divinely appointed, unalterable course of nature." R. D. Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean* (New York, 1910), 92.

<sup>43</sup> Thus Cicero says to his son: "Nam si quis ab ineunte aetate habet causam celebritatis et nominis aut a patre acceptam, quod tibi, mi Cicero, arbitror contigisse, aut aliquo casu atque fortuna, in hunc oculi omnium coniciuntur atque in eum, quid agat, quem ad modum vivat, inquiritur et, tamquam in clarissima luce versetur, ita nullum obscurum potest nec dictum eius esse nec factum." *De off.*, II, 44.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De re publica* I, 2; *De off.*, I, 72; et *passim*.

a citizen are designed his "Moral Duties," and if he lives up to the virtues outlined and serves his country he possesses true nobility and is deserving of honor even though he be not generally ennobled.<sup>45</sup> Moral goodness rests in deeds, not in fame, and the genuine nobleman prefers to be first in reality rather than in name.<sup>46</sup>

A Roman noble was almost unthinkable without wealth. Many of the nobles became, in fact, great capitalists,<sup>47</sup> and the crowd undeniably regarded riches as a main reason for reverencing their possessor. Cicero, too, recognizes wealth as a valuable concomitant for nobility. This wealth, however, must have been honestly obtained, and must not captivate the heart of him who is favored with it. He believes that love of riches characterizes a narrow, base disposition.<sup>48</sup> Wealth must never be a determining factor in the bestowal of public honor, and it is, indeed, a bad state of affairs when that which ought to be obtained by virtue is secured by money.<sup>49</sup>

Very little emphasis is placed upon the aesthetic side. Herein lies, in fact, the main difference between the Greek and the Roman ideal. The Greek love of proportion, of balance, is lost to the more practical Romans. The business of life absorbs the attention, and moral rather than aesthetic considerations set the standard. Furthermore, the importance of moral nobility is accentuated by divesting it of the necessity of noble extraction and making it dependent upon virtuous acts alone. In addition, mere possession of good qualities does not constitute moral goodness, that is there is no such thing as an absolute nobility of heart based upon divine predilection and limited to a privileged social class. Cicero's nobleman is the virtuous man, who by his noble acts and excellent behavior gains the esteem of his fellowmen; these in turn are willing to look up to him and to be ruled by him.<sup>50</sup> Cicero, referring to the nobility of his time, says:

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De off.*, I, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, I, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. E. Bevan, *The World of Greece and Rome* (London, 1928), 73.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *De off.*, I, 68.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, II, 22.

<sup>50</sup> Cicero, *De re publica* I, 51.

nostri isti nobiles nisi vigilantes et boni et fortes  
et misericordes erunt, iis hominibus, in quibus haec  
erunt, ornamenta sua concedant necesse est.<sup>51</sup>

W. Drumann aptly comments on this passage, saying:

Das Vorrecht ohne höhere Befähigung und Würdigkeit  
verletzt, wo nicht Herren und Sklaven mit Sklavensinn  
nebeneinanderstehen.<sup>52</sup>

There is but a short path now to the end of the old Roman nobility. During the time of the emperors the senate became a figurehead and the government 'a bureaucracy'.<sup>53</sup> Bitter strife between the emperors and the leading senatorial families resulted in an almost complete annihilation of the latter by the end of Nero's reign.<sup>54</sup> The new social class of imperial officials, recruited largely from the city bourgeoisie and from the slaves and freedmen of the emperors,<sup>55</sup> increased rapidly in number and influence, gradually replacing the Roman nobility of Republican times. The emperors granted and sold to them large tracts of land, thus creating a landed aristocracy of immense wealth.<sup>56</sup>

Serious protests to this state of affairs are not wanting. Both Horace and Juvenal castigate the degeneracy of aristocratic Rome and contrast the vigor of early Rome with the enervated atmosphere of their own times. Neither kindred nor virtue, says Horace, count for aught in these times unless accompanied by wealth.<sup>57</sup> A man is valued according to his possessions,<sup>58</sup> and "Queen Money"

<sup>51</sup> *Pro S. Roscio Amerino* 139.

<sup>52</sup> *Geschichte Roms*, 2nd ed. by P. Groebe (Leipzig, 1919), V, 256, n. 9.

<sup>53</sup> This class of government officials existed in germ under Augustus but increased rapidly in number and influence under his successors, especially Claudius and Vespasian. Cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *The social and economic history of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1926), 81.

<sup>54</sup> Suetonius in his *Lives of the Caesars* (120) presents a realistic picture of the persecutions which the senatorial aristocracy experienced. Cf. also F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le début du moyen âge* (Paris, 1927), 95.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, 81; see also A. Stein, *Der römische Ritterstand* (München, 1927), 421 ff.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 95.

<sup>57</sup> *Sat.* II, v, 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 62.

supplies him with everything desirable.<sup>59</sup> But nobility, he contends, can never be bought:

licet superbus ambules pecunia,  
Fortuna non mutat genus.<sup>60</sup>

Joys, Horace observes, are not confined to the rich only, nor has he lived ill who from birth to death has remained unknown.<sup>61</sup>

Juvenal blames money for much of the evil that has befallen the country, saying:

prima peregrinos obscena pecunia mores  
intulit, et turpi fregerunt saecula luxu  
divitiae molles.<sup>62</sup>

Personal nobility, he avers, is the only true nobility.

nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.<sup>63</sup>

Noble lineage and the possession of large estates do not make a true nobleman. Deprived of a noble character a man has no moral right to be preferred to others.<sup>64</sup> But such is the degeneracy of the times that a man's worth is measured only by the standard of wealth.<sup>65</sup>

- " "genus et formam regina Pecunia donat." Horace, *Epist.*, I, vi, 37.  
omnis enim res,  
virtus, fama, decus, divina humanaque pulchris  
divitiis parent; quas qui construxerit, ille  
clarus erit, fortis, iustus. "sapiensne? etiam, et rex  
et quidquid volet."  
Horace, *Sat.* II, iii, 94-98.

<sup>59</sup> *Epod.* IV, 5-6. Cf. also *Sat.* I, vi, 1-44.

<sup>61</sup> *Epist.* I, xvii, 9-10.

<sup>62</sup> *Sat.* VI, 298-300.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 20.

- " prima mihi debes animi bona. sanctus haberi  
justitiaeque tenax factis dictisque mereris?  
adgnosco procerem. *Ibid.*, VIII, 24-27.

quis enim generosum dixerit hunc qui  
indignus genere et praeclaro nomine tantum  
insignis? *Ibid.*, VIII, 30-32.

miserum est aliorum incumbere famae.  
*Ibid.*, VIII, 76. Cf. also 269-271.

- " quantum quisque sua nummorum servat in arca,  
tantum habet et fidei. *Ibid.*, III, 143-144.



It was this capitalistic aristocracy which evidently formed the bulk of the Roman nobility during the empire.<sup>66</sup> Public spirit, an essential quality of the nobility during Cicero's time, was no longer to be found among the senatorial aristocracy of the late Empire. Debarred from the army and made exclusive by a rigid caste system,<sup>67</sup> the ruling class lost all spontaneity and initiative. Their landed estates formed their sole interest and often, it may be presumed, their only title to social preference.<sup>68</sup>

A new significance was given to nobility through Christ's ethical teaching.<sup>69</sup> He passed no comment on social rank nor did He in any way ethically examine the fundamental rights of man. But He emphasized the divine origin of the soul, the common brotherhood of all men, and contempt for worldly goods. He came at a critical moment, when even the best were drifting into purely material self-seeking; when the pursuit of ease and pleasure, of wealth and political power, was combined with a careful avoidance of work and duty.<sup>70</sup> The Christian view of life and the complete

<sup>66</sup> According to Rostovtzeff, the second century, *i. e.*, the time of the Flavians and Antonines, formed an exception. He says: "The Roman state was indeed still ruled by an aristocratic and plutocratic class, but selection of its members was based not so much on birth and wealth as on personal merits, efficiency, and intellectual gifts." *Op. cit.*, 119.

<sup>67</sup> This caste system and its attending evils are well described by F. Lot, *op. cit.*, 115-146.

<sup>68</sup> Lot says: "Se déprénant de charges publiques, l'aristocratie s'attache plus passionnément que jamais à la terre, désormais seule source de la richesse. Elle se réfugie sur ses immenses domaines et y mène une vie facile, autant que possible à l'abri des séductions, des menaces aussi, du pouvoir public." *Op. cit.*, 210.

<sup>69</sup> Regarding the Jewish concept see ch. IV, 103 ff.

<sup>70</sup> I. Seipel thus characterizes decadent Rome: "Die Sucht zu besitzen und die Sucht zu geniessen herrschten. Der Besitz war es in erster Linie, wovon die Stellung des Bürgers im Reiche abhing, alles andere war nur insofern von praktischem Nutzen, als es zu Besitz verhalf oder das Leben des Besitzenden noch glanzreicher und angenehmer gestalten konnte. Wer keine Aussicht hatte, zu einem Besitze zu gelangen, der ihm das Emporsteigen in die höheren Kreise ermöglichte, begnügte sich leicht damit, in der Tiefe zu bleiben, wenn er dabei nur möglichst mühelos und doch in seiner Art genussreich leben konnte." — "Die Wirtschaftsethischen Lehren der Kirchenväter," *Theologische Studien der Leo-Gesellschaft* 18 (Wien, 1907), 46 f. Cf. also Tacitus, *Ann.* III, 53-56.

reinterpretation of the ideals of existence became important factors for reorganizing this world, socially and economically as well as morally and politically bankrupt. The ethical concept of life before Christ was quite devoid of the idealism and perfection preached by the founder of Christianity. Stoic philosophers, among them Seneca, had indeed come quite close to the Christian ideal,<sup>71</sup> but their fundamental principles were intrinsically different.<sup>72</sup>

The writings of the early Fathers of the Church set forth the Christian view of life. Their doctrine and their form of exposition repeatedly point to classical, especially Stoic, influence. Christian thought, undoubtedly, owes much to the philosophical systems established by the ancients. The Fathers use all the good they find in classic antiquity and transform it by infusing into it the Christian ideal of the gospel.<sup>73</sup>

Nobility of birth is rarely mentioned explicitly by these early Christian writers. Evidently, the Christian idea concerning its value was so clear that it needed no further explanation. In the East the problem of birth seems to have been more acute than in the West,<sup>74</sup> for references among the Greek Fathers are common and direct, while those of the Latin writers are mostly incidental remarks.

Clement of Alexandria is the first of the Fathers of the East who combines Stoic philosophy with the Christian ideal of virtue.<sup>75</sup> He had entered Christianity with a mind steeped in Greek learning, and in his writings he drew as freely from Plato, Homer, or Euripides

<sup>71</sup> J. Stelzenberger says of Seneca: "Der Heide ist aufgerückt zu einem Autor, den man ohne Bedenken neben einem Kirchenvater anführen darf." *Die Beziehungen der frühchristlichen Sittenlehre zur Ethik der Stoa* (München, 1933), 48.

<sup>72</sup> A recent writer says: "Das Christentum hat seine aus der Offenbarung stammenden sittlichen Prinzipien, die von der rein natürlichen Ethik der Antike um Welten getrennt sind." *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. J. P. Kirsch, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* I, 486 f.; J. Stelzenberger, *op. cit.*, 18 ff.; V. Vedel, *Ritterromantik* (Leipzig, 1911), 13 f.; J. Leipoldt, "Christentum und Stoizismus," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 27 (1906), 129-165; R. J. Deferrari, *Catholic educational review* 24 (1926), 521-528; 620-629.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. P. Boissonade, *Life and work in medieval Europe* (London, 1927), 39 f.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. J. Stelzenberger, *op. cit.*, 226.

pides as from Holy Scripture.<sup>76</sup> He voices the Christian concept of nobility by affirming that the God-fearing Christian alone may be called rich, of sound mind, and "well-born," i. e., noble. Through the mediation of Christ he becomes "just and holy with understanding"; he becomes like to God, being made a son of God.<sup>77</sup>

St. John Chrysostom is still more explicit in his remarks on nobility. What good, he says, did it do to the children of Samuel that their father was noble, since they themselves did not become heirs of his virtue?<sup>78</sup> Noble birth, he affirms, is no reason for pride.<sup>79</sup> All who are baptized are children of God, which constitutes our nobility.<sup>80</sup> This nobility in its excellence cannot be compared with nobility of birth.<sup>81</sup>

In the West, Minucius Felix exalts the superiority of moral nobility and declares that virtue alone is able to confer lasting distinction.<sup>82</sup> St. Ambrose also shows himself a direct heir of Cicero<sup>83</sup> and his classical predecessors by referring to *virtue* as the *only true nobility*.<sup>84</sup> As far as external goods are concerned he

<sup>76</sup> For his life and writings, see O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg i. Br., 1913-32), II, 40-95.

<sup>77</sup> "ὦρα οὖν ἡμῖν μόνον τὸν θεοσεβῆ [Χριστιανὸν] εἰπεῖν πλούσιόν τε καὶ σώφρονα καὶ εὐγενῆ καὶ ταύτῃ εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ μεθ' ὁμοιώσεως, καὶ λέγειν καὶ πιστεῖν "δικαίον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως" γενόμενον ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ εἰς τοσοῦτον ὅμοιον ἦδη καὶ θεῷ." *Exhortation to the Greeks*, ch. XII.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *In Matth.*, *Homil.*, IX, 5, Migne, *PGr.*, 57, 181.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 182; *Homil.*, LVIII, 4, Migne, *PGr.*, 58, 570.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 57, 279.

<sup>81</sup> "Οὗτος τῆς εὐγενείας ὁ τρόπος βελτίων ἐκείνου καὶ κυριώτερος." *Ibid.*, 57, 466; cf. also 57, 387.

<sup>82</sup> He says: "Fascibus et purpuris gloriaris? Vanus error hominis et inanis cultus dignitatis, fulgere purpura, mente sordescere. Nobilitate generosus es? Parentes tuos laudas? Omnes tamen pari sorte nascimur, sola virtute distinguimur." *Octavius* XXXVII, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. P. Ewald, *Der Einfluss der stoisch-ciceronianischen Moral auf die Darstellung der Ethik bei Ambrosius*, Diss. (Leipzig, 1881); Th. Schmidt, *Ambrosius, sein Werk De officiis libri 3 und die Stoa*, Diss. (Erlangen, 1897); J. Stelzenberger, *op. cit.*, 234-242; R. J. Deferrari, *Philological Quarterly* 1 (1922), 142; 6 (1927), 106; Alois Dempf, *Die Hauptform mittelalterlicher Weltanschauung* (München u. Berlin, 1925), 33.

<sup>84</sup> *De Nabuthae*, Sect. 54 and 61, *CSEL*. XXXII, 499 and 505; cf. also Martin R. P. McGuire, *S. Ambrosii De Nabuthae*, Diss. (Washington, 1927), 82 f., and commentary to section 54 on p. 182 f.; then p. 90 f.

holds that they are not necessary to perfect happiness, and that their want does not decrease it.<sup>85</sup> They are, indeed, often an obstacle to happiness<sup>86</sup> whereas misfortunes frequently increase it.<sup>87</sup>

St. Augustine pays a beautiful tribute to Christian nobility in a letter of congratulation sent to the grandmother, Proba, and the mother, Juliana, when the noble Demetrias left the world and consecrated herself to God. St. Augustine states that the young girl, noble by descent, yet nobler still by holiness, has more reason to rejoice because, by taking the veil, she may hope to obtain the highest nobility in heaven, which is to be prized more than earthly glory.<sup>88</sup> He does not disapprove of social distinctions, but recognizes their purely relative value. The highest ideal for the Christian is union with God through charity. Virtue without God is an empty word and cannot constitute supreme happiness.<sup>89</sup> There is a happiness which consists in the perfection of all man's faculties, but above that happiness is the *summa et incommutabilis bonitas*, God Himself.<sup>90</sup>

Boethius, the last of the Roman philosophers, and the first of the scholastic theologians,<sup>91</sup> speaks of nobility only once and the reference made regards nobility of birth. He calls it "a vain and idle thing" because it rests on the fame which our ancestors have acquired, not on our own merit. The only good there is in it is this, that it makes us watchful lest we depart from the virtuous paths of our fathers.<sup>92</sup> He also refers to the divine origin of the soul,

<sup>85</sup> *De off.*, II, 4: 12, Migne, *PL.* 16, 106 f.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 9: 28; II, 5: 16, Migne, *PL.* 16, 32; 107.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 9: 29; II, 4: 15, Migne, *PL.* 16, 32; 107.

<sup>88</sup> *Epist.* 150, *CSEL.* 44, 381.

<sup>89</sup> *Epist.* 155, *CSEL.* 44, 443.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. J. Mausbach, *Catholic moral teaching and its antagonists* (New York, 1914), 222.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Paul Th. Hoffmann, *Der mittelalterliche Mensch gesehen aus Welt und Umwelt Notkers des Deutschen* (Gotha, 1922), 194 f.; S. Singer, "Altertum und Mittelalter," *Neophilologus* 19 (1934), 199 f.; E. K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1928), 135-180.

<sup>92</sup> "Iam vero quam sit inane quam futille nobilitatis nomen, quis non videat? Quae si ad claritudinem refertur, aliena est. Videtur namque esse nobilitas quaedam de meritis veniens laus parentum. Quod si claritudinem praedicatio facit, illi sint clari necesse est qui praedicantur. Quare splendidum te, si tuam non habes, aliena claritudo non efficit. Quod si

which makes God the author of the race and the Father of mankind.<sup>93</sup>

If we compare the classical with the Christian ideal of nobility we perceive that a fundamental change has taken place. Nobility of birth, the accident of a social class, has no significance whatsoever as far as the Christian ideal of life is concerned. Moral nobility, the superiority of which was extolled even by the classical writers,<sup>94</sup> is esteemed very highly but is not the highest good and must not be sought for its own sake. Alone it is unable to give perfect happiness, but merely leads to it. The real contribution of Christianity to the concept of nobility is found, however, in its emphasis on the divine origin of the soul. Thus was established a contact between the finite and the infinite. Christ's redemption placed the value of the human soul in the brightest light, and God, by calling Himself the Father of all, gave to all alike a claim to nobility. The relations which were to bind men together were of a divine nature and more sacred in character than those of flesh and blood. The highest ideal of this nobility is expressed in the command: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>95</sup>

When Christianity first came into contact with Germanic tribes,<sup>96</sup> it met there a nobility which resembled, to some extent at least, the nobility of Homeric times.<sup>97</sup> It was a privileged social class,

quid est in nobilitate bonum, id esse arbitror solum, ut inposita nobilibus necessitudo videatur ne a maiorum virtute degeneret." *De Consolatione* III, 20-29.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Sall. *Jug.*, 85; Hor. *Sat.*, I, vi, 1-44; *Juv.* 8; but especially Seneca, *Epist.* 44.

<sup>95</sup> *Matth.* 5, 48.

<sup>96</sup> We know today that Christian communities existed as early as the second century A. D. not only in southern Gaul but even on the Rhine and the Moselle. Cf. Alfons Dopsch, *Wirtschaftliche und soziale Grundlagen der europäischen Kulturentwicklung*, 2nd ed. (Wien, 1923-24), II, 196 f.; also A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* (Leipzig, 1904-1920), I, 6 ff.; F. Kluge, "Gotische Lehnworte im Althochdeutschen," *PBB.* 35 (1909), 124 ff.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Rudolf Petersdorff, *Germanen und Griechen*. Übereinstimmungen in ihrer ältesten Kultur im Anschluss an die Germania des Tacitus und Homer (Wiesbaden, 1902), 55-59, and O. Fleischer, "Die vorgermanische germanisch-griechische Kulturgemeinschaft," *Mannus* 14 (1922), 1-72.

distinct from the ordinary freemen, with signal honors and rights.<sup>98</sup> To the noble family was attributed divine descent, and powers transcending ordinary human nature were imputed to these favorites of fortune.<sup>99</sup> Caesar and Tacitus make some allusions to this early Germanic nobility. Caesar refers to it only casually,<sup>100</sup> but in these references he agrees with what Tacitus tells us about the existence of a superior class among the German tribes, which he calls *principes*. Tacitus states that the Germanic kings were taken from the most notable ("*Reges ex nobilitate*"),<sup>101</sup> and that the *insignis nobilitas* determined the rank and dignity of a prince.<sup>102</sup> The nobility had a special privilege in assemblies. Though important questions were discussed and decided upon by the people, they were, however, first handled by the princes or nobles. In trivial matters the decision of the latter alone was required.<sup>103</sup> Land was distributed on the basis of rank ("*secundum dignationem*").<sup>104</sup> Thus ownership of land was a characteristic sign of nobility, determining, as it were, its greater or lesser degree. Tacitus also refers to the fact that this nobility was inherited. He says :

*insignis nobilitas aut magna patrum merita principis dignationem etiam adolescentulis adsignant.*<sup>105</sup>

The upper class was distinguished even outwardly from the general class of men. The free-born of the Suebi, for example, combed their hair back over the side of the face and tied it low in a knot behind.<sup>106</sup> The dress of the rich was also different from that of inferior persons. ("*locupletissimi veste distinguuntur*").<sup>107</sup>

<sup>98</sup> "Bei Caesar und Tacitus erscheint ein stark bevorrechteter Adel, in dessen Hand die Vertretung des Volkes nach aussen sowie seine Leitung im Innern, insbesondere aber auch die Führung bei kriegerischen Unternehmungen liegt." V. Ernst, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Grundeigentums* (Stuttgart, 1926), 28. Cf. A. Dopsch, *op. cit.*, II, 42; H. Wopfner opposes this viewpoint in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* (1923), 197.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Karl v. Amira, *Grundriss des germanischen Rechts*, 3rd ed. (Strassburg, 1913), 128.

<sup>100</sup> *De bello gallico* VI, 23 and IV, 13.

<sup>101</sup> *Germ.*, c. 7.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 11.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 26. Cf. A. Dopsch, *op. cit.*, I, 66 ff., and especially 73; also V. Ernst, *op. cit.*, 11 and 17.

<sup>105</sup> *Germ.*, c. 13.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 38.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 17.

Nobility was intimately connected with the sword, and courage was the most manly and ennobling virtue among the Germans. Their generals were chosen on the basis of courage ("duces ex virtute sumunt").<sup>108</sup> Disgrace fell on the man who left his shield behind him on the battlefield. He could not be present at the tribal worship nor take part in a council. The man so disgraced often ended his infamy by a self-inflicted death.<sup>109</sup> Cowardice, desertion, and similar crimes were punished very severely.<sup>110</sup>

The most characteristic trait of Germanic nobility was, however, the retinue, the *Gefolgschaft*, with which the nobles surrounded themselves. According to Tacitus,<sup>111</sup> young men of the best blood attached themselves to a leader to serve in his train.<sup>112</sup> These retainers struggled for the nearest place to the chief and he in turn strove to keep the largest and most effective retinue. It meant to him rank and strength to be surrounded by such a band. His name and influence were thus carried beyond his own country and brought him renown and gifts. His reputation alone was sometimes enough to put down a war.<sup>113</sup> The retinue consisted of noble youths ("nobilium adolescentium"),<sup>114</sup> who voluntarily attached themselves to famous leaders in order to attain distinction.<sup>115</sup> But there were, as Tacitus tells us, degrees in this retinue ("gradus quin etiam ipse comitatus habet"),<sup>116</sup> and these degrees depended upon the judgment of the leader. Evidently, superior courage entitled to higher rank, and thus we have a proof that the Germanic people rated virtue higher than other natural gifts. This primitive Germanic *Gefolgschaftswesen* is also a splendid example *deutscher Mannestreue*, as we find it celebrated in the later national epics. The retainers had to stand by their chief in his captivity and even in his death. To survive him meant disgrace.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 7. Cf. also A. Dopsch, *op. cit.*, II, 41.

<sup>109</sup> *Germ.*, c. 6.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 12.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 13.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. the "Pagen" at the court of princes. See ch. II, 56 f.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Francis B. Gummere, *Germanic origins* (New York, 1892), 226-269.

<sup>114</sup> *Germ.*, c. 14. Cf. H. Munro Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912), 348 ff.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Caesar, *De bello gallico* VI, 23.

<sup>116</sup> *Germ.*, c. 13.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 14. Cf. also Caesar, *De bello gallico* III, 22; E. Norden, *Die*

If we follow Tacitus' account as the authentic description of primitive Germanic nobility, we must conclude that the Germanic people believed in a nobility distinct from the ordinary class of freemen because of honorable descent, large ownership of land, and above all a high degree of manly valor, faithfulness, and courage.<sup>118</sup>

This nobility, which maintained itself for a longer time among the Saxons, Thuringians, Bavarians, and Lombards, early disappeared among the Franks.<sup>119</sup> The sources of this period do not mention a hereditary noble order. There was, however, a numerous upper class, the *antrustiones*,<sup>120</sup> made up of various races and social elements. Though not a noble caste,<sup>121</sup> they were the privileged class of the realm, distinguished by a triple *wergeld* (*vira-gilda*, "a man's price").<sup>122</sup> The man in *truste dominica* owed his posi-

*germanische Urgeschichte in Tacitus Germania* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1923), 124-127; A. Dopsch, *op. cit.*, II, 43-49.

<sup>118</sup> Otto Gierke says: "Tief wurzelte im germanischen Gemüth der Glaube, dass mit dem Blute die Eigenschaften des Körpers und der Seele fortgepflanzt würden. Höher ehrte man daher die Nachkommen hervorragender Männer, gerechter Richter, und Heerführer aus den Söhnen derer, die es ruhmvoll geleitet, und hielt erst, wenn unter ihnen kein Tauglicher sich fand,—bei den einfachen Anforderungen jener Zeit gewiss ein seltener Fall—unter den andern Volksgenossen Umschau." *Op cit.*, I, 36. Cf. also Karl v. Amira, *Grundriss des germanischen Rechts*, 3rd ed. (Strassburg, 1913), 128.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. S. Dill, *Roman society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London, 1926), 216-234.

<sup>120</sup> *Antrustio* is he who is in trust, more especially in the king's trust, and who has an office, military or civil, temporary or standing. H. Brunner gives the following definition: "Das Wort kommt von salfränk. *trust* (latinisiert *trustis*), ahd. *trôst* (*protectio adiutorium* auch *Gefolgschaft*, Schar). Der *Antrustio* schwört dem König, wenn er in den Dienst aufgenommen wird, *trustem et fidelitatem*. Hat er sonach seinen Namen nicht sowohl von der *trustis*, die er vom König empfängt, als von der *trustis*, die er ihm zu leisten verpflichtet ist, so ist *protector*, *adiutor* die Grundbedeutung des Wortes. Die *Antrustiones* bildeten eben ursprünglich die königliche Garde, eine berittene, militärisch organisierte Gefolgschaft, welche der Person des Königs und seinem Hause zum Schutze diente." *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte* II, 2nd ed. by Claudius Freiherrn v. Schwerin (München u. Leipzig, 1928), 134 f.

<sup>121</sup> "Die *Antrustionen* konnten nicht nur Freie, sondern auch Liten und Knechte sein." *Ibid.* 137.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *ibid.*



tion solely to the will of the king, to whom he had sworn *trustem et fidelitatem*.<sup>123</sup> In return for his loyalty and service he was rewarded with royal gifts, often large grants of land from the fisc.<sup>124</sup>

Besides *antrustiones* there was a large class of courtiers, high officials and possessors of landed wealth, the latter composed of both Frank and Gallo-Roman elements, who exercised a powerful social and political influence.<sup>125</sup> The *major domus*, originally a mere household official,<sup>126</sup> developed rapidly into a great political officer, who became the leader of the *antrustiones* in the seventh century.<sup>127</sup> With the growing power of the nobles and the mayors of the palace came the downfall of royal authority. The official aristocracy, called into being and favored by the Merovingians, finally usurped royal functions, displacing the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>128</sup>

Under the rule of the Carolingians the conquest of the Lombard Kingdom in Italy (773-774) and the subjugation of the hitherto heathen Saxons (785) weakened the old Germanic nobility still further. Tribal representatives were replaced everywhere by Frankish officials. Yet the stubborn nature of the Saxons clung for a long time to the primitive social institutions and opposed vigorously the introduction of feudal laws and methods.

An important poetical monument of this crucial period of German history is the Old Saxon *Heliand*,<sup>129</sup> the earliest Christian epic in a European dialect.<sup>130</sup> The author of this remarkable poem

<sup>123</sup> The oath of the *antrustio* is mentioned in the *Lex Salica*. "Si in trustee dominica est iuratus." *Lex Salica* XLII, codd. 6. 5, 2, Hessels' ed., col. 266.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. S. Dill, *op cit.*, 224.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 223 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Concerning the office of the *major domus*, see H. Brunner, *op. cit.*, 142-148.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 144.

<sup>128</sup> The last king of the Merovingians, Childeric III, was deposed and placed in a monastery, and Pepin the Short (741-768), son of Charles Martel, was raised upon the shield of Mars at Soissons, as king of the Franks (754). The office of *major domus* now came to an end. Cf. H. Brunner, *op. cit.*, 148. The *antrustiones* were replaced by the *vassi*, the royal vassals. Cf. *ibid.*, 180.

<sup>129</sup> The name was given to the poem by its first editor, Schmeller, in the edition of 1830. Cf. G. Ehrismann, *LG*. I, 2nd ed. (München, 1932), 158.

<sup>130</sup> Ehrismann dates it between 822 and 840. Cf. *ibid.*, 162.

projects the Gospel narrative upon the background of his own time and thus supplies valuable hints regarding Old Saxon social life and ideals. Christ appears in the poem as the glorious hero, who fights against sin, hell, and the demons, as the noble and powerful leader and protector of his chosen followers. He is the *adal-kuning*,<sup>131</sup> who is descended from the best family ("thes bezton giburdies").<sup>132</sup> Mary too is of noble birth, belonging to the house of David, the famous *adalkuning*.<sup>133</sup> Joseph and the prophets are also of noble descent,<sup>134</sup> and the Israelites are called *edilifolkun*.<sup>135</sup> Christ is the *drohtin*, the *Gefolgsherr*, the leader of his people, the *mêdomgebo*,<sup>136</sup> the *bâggebo*,<sup>137</sup> and *râdgebo*.<sup>138</sup> His disciples form his retinue, they are his companions, *erlos adalborana*,<sup>139</sup> who accompany their master through the country, surround him when he gives his laws, and who are faithful to him unto death. The writer grows eloquent when he speaks of Matthew, who leaves his treasures to follow Christ.<sup>140</sup> The apostle Thomas speaks of the duty of the faithful follower to remain near his lord until the end, to account life as worthless without him, and to die with him.<sup>141</sup> The poet cannot understand the deed of Judas, who betrayed his master. He calls him *warg*,<sup>142</sup> i. e., a criminal, an evil-doer.<sup>143</sup> The German's delight in battle and conquest is felt in the scene where the poet relates the attack of the valorous earl Peter upon Malchus.<sup>144</sup>

Thus the *Heliand* furnishes interesting evidence as to how far Germanic ideals harmonized with Christian teaching at the time of its composition. The virtues of the Saxon noble, manliness, courage, loyalty, and faithfulness, are expected of the follower of

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *Heliand*, Otto Behagel's edition, lines 362 and 2114. This edition is used for all citations. Other works used in this connection are: Edward H. Sehart, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zum Heliand und zur altsächsischen Genesis* (Göttingen, 1925); G. Ehrismann, *LG.*, I, 158-165; E. Lagenpusch, "Das germanische Recht im Heliand," *Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte* von O. Gierke, 46. Heft (Breslau, 1894).

<sup>132</sup> *Heliand* 584.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 768 and 2541.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 361 ff.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 3318.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 1200. Cf. also E. Lagenpusch, *op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>137</sup> *Heliand* 2738.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 1192 ff.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 627.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 3995 ff.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 4003.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 5168.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. E. H. Sehart, *op. cit.*, 641; E. Lagenpusch, *op. cit.*, 14 and 70.

<sup>144</sup> *Heliand* 4869 ff.

Christ. The poet, probably a true Saxon, omits Christ's lowly entrance into Jerusalem. That was, as he evidently believes, inconsistent with the dignity of a king.

The introduction of feudalism into Germany weakened considerably the independent spirit of the German nobles. Historians still disagree as to the origin of this system,<sup>145</sup> which completely dominated the life of medieval Europe especially from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Its rapid growth in Germany was somewhat halted by the stubborn nature of tribal dukes, who, though they recognized the office of the king, did not admit that they held their duchies of the crown.<sup>146</sup> Allodial pride would not allow the taking of a benefice from the emperor. Jacob Grimm<sup>147</sup> gives an interesting example of the lordly spirit of the German noble. When the emperor Frederic I (1152-1190) passed one day through Thun, a nobleman, instead of saluting him in the feudal manner, merely raised his hat in courteous greeting. The emperor, annoyed by this act, was told that the Baron of Krenchingen was so old, noble, and free, that he owed neither service nor homage to any man.

Thirty years of bitter warfare between Franks and Saxons, and the final conquest of the latter, were unable to break entirely the proud independence of Saxon dukes. Saxony retained its own nobility as late as the tenth century.<sup>148</sup> The war of investiture of

<sup>145</sup> Brunner says: "Als sicheres Ergebnis der wissenschaftlichen Forschung steht fest, dass das Lehenwesen aus der Verschmelzung zweier begrifflich zu sondernder Rechtsinstitute hervorging, des Beneficialwesens und der Vasallität. Allein der Ursprung der beiden geschichtlichen Faktoren des Lehens ist streitig und bildet den Gegenstand lebhafter bis heute unerledigter Kontroversen." *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, II, 329; see also J. Calmette, *Le monde féodal* (Paris, 1934), 165 ff.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany* (Chicago, 1928), 293. In order to express their complete freedom, a number of landed nobles called their own great fiefs *Sonnenlehen*, or "sun fiefs." Jacob Grimm says: "Diese güter waren gleichsam himmlische lehen, nicht irdische, d. h. der wirkung nach allode, die zu keiner dienstleistung verpflichteten. Hauptsächlich erscheinen sie in austrasischen und ripuarischen gegenden." *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*, 4th ed. by Andreas Heusler and Rudolf Hübner (Leipzig, 1899) I, 388.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, I, 389.

<sup>148</sup> "In the tenth century, Saxony was the only country of North Germany still retaining its own historic and old-line noblesse." J. W. Thompson,

the eleventh and the Saxon rebellion of the twelfth century procured a stronger foothold for feudalism, and by the end of Hohenstaufen times it was well established in Germany. Henceforth, feudal nobles ruled the country, and the complicated system of land tenure imposed its obligations upon all, from the king down to those who held such small fiefs as would hardly suffice for an honorable existence.<sup>149</sup>

Christianity also greatly modified the original Germanic concept of nobility. The belief that before God all men are equal was soon shared by high and low. The emperor Louis the Pious (814-840), in a preface to a collection of capitularies, declares that by nature he is the equal of other men, being superior only in the dignity of authority.<sup>150</sup> An unknown poet, who had been treated with contempt by the emperor Henry V (1106-1125), reminds the latter that the creator has made all alike, that the emperor is his brother, and owes his position merely to the whim of fortune which subverted natural law.<sup>151</sup> The idea that God is the Father of all is emphasized in several of the early poems.<sup>152</sup> All men are God's heirs,<sup>153</sup> because God is their true father.<sup>154</sup> There will be no distinction of classes in heaven.<sup>155</sup> Death levels all social differences.<sup>156</sup> God, says the author of the *Sachsenspiegel* (1230), made all men

*op. cit.*, 170. Concerning the nobility and freemen among the Saxons, see G. Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte* III (Kiel, 1860), 119-150; also J. Ficker, *Vom Heerschild* (Innsbruck, 1862), 125 ff.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. J. W. Thompson, *op. cit.*, 318.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *Mon. Germ. Hist. Legum* Sect. II, vol. I, No. 137; cf. also *ibid.*, No. 154.

<sup>151</sup> "Der Schöpfer hat uns alle gleich gemacht. Aber die Kunst gewann den Vorrang, der Zufall überwand die Natur, er setzte Dich über mich und verletzte das Naturrecht, — Du bist mein Bruder, *einen* Vater haben wir alle." Quoted from Friedrich v. Bezold, *Aus Mittelalter und Renaissance* (München u. Berlin, 1918), 18 f.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *Kchr.* 3061; *Hochz.* 433 f.; *Milst. Südkl.* 257 ff. — Cf. also M. Mackensen, "Anschauungen der frühmittelhochdeutschen Dichter," *Neue Heidelberger Jahrb.* (1925), 144 f.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Rol.* 983.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 8612; *Paternoster* 5, 1 ff.; *Eszo* 26, 1 ff.

<sup>155</sup> *Vom Himmelr.* 24,43-25,3.

<sup>156</sup> *Mem. Mori* 13, 5; *Cant. de conv. S. Pauli* 27 ff., ed. by E. Martin in *ZfdA.* 40 (1896), 328-331.

according to His own likeness, and redeemed man by His passion without distinction of person.<sup>157</sup>

The Germanic ideal of nobility, modified by Christian teaching through which the idea of reward for faithful service was made the center of medieval ethics,<sup>158</sup> became also a foundation for medieval knighthood. Military valor was consecrated to the service of the Church, and courage, faithfulness, and loyalty were outstanding in the code of knightly virtues.

Knighthood in its origin was exclusively military. It was the knight's privilege to sit a horse and bear arms, whereas the peasant was unarmed.<sup>159</sup> The institution developed in France as early as the ninth century,<sup>160</sup> and from there spread to Germany where neither knights nor knighthood were known before the twelfth century.<sup>161</sup> The crusades, which brought about a close contact of the Orient and the Occident and unfolded to the European soldier the splendor and grace of the East, gave the first impulse to the creation of chivalry, that gallantry of knighthood which distinguished itself by deep religious feeling, heroic courage, purity, refinement of manners, and respect for womanhood. The twelfth and the greater part of the thirteenth century witnessed the full development of knighthood and chivalry in Germany.

The new spirit engendered by knighthood, created a new, refined type of man, whose exquisite manners and noble bearing contrasted favorably with that of the rough, uncouth Germanic heroes of old. The courtly epics of that time show us the nobleman in a new light. A peculiarly refined atmosphere pervades the writings of Heinrich von Veldeke, Eilhart von Oberg, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Hartmann von Aue, Gottfried von Strassburg, and their French model, Chrétien de Troyes. "Im schönen, beherrschten Körper wohne die schöne, beherrschte Seele (das edle Herz); Leib ist Ausdruck und Form der Seele, Seele Ausdruck des Leibes und des edlen Zusammenspiels der Glieder; Tugend ist lehrbar; *edles schönes Mass* ist das Ziel der Erziehung; unablässig ist jeder bemüht, sich edler

<sup>157</sup> "Got hevet den man na ime selven gebeldet, unde hevet ine mit siner martere geledet, den enen also den anderen, ime is die arme also besvas als die rike." *Sachsenspiegel* III, 42, 1.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. G. Ehrismann, *LG.*, I, 170.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. P. Guilhiermoz, *Essai sur l'origine de la noblesse en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1902), 379 f.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. J. W. Thompson, *op. cit.*, 311.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 313.

und edler zu gestalten."<sup>162</sup> This is, briefly, the courtly ideal of nobility, as it comes down to us from the twelfth century.

The emphasis upon the aesthetic is new to the Germanic ideal. It gives it a character gracious and fine, reminiscent of the old Greek ideal. The favorite watchword of the Greeks, the "*μέσον*," becomes now the Germanic motto, *māze*. With Wolfram, noble qualities of body and soul are the result of noble birth. He is eager to give each person the distinction of noble descent. The knights know at once that Parzival is of noble parentage because of his unusual beauty.<sup>163</sup> Though purposely left in ignorance about knighthood, his inborn desire to perform noble deeds urges him to seek and find it. Wolfram loves to point out that the beautiful qualities of his heroes are natural to them, that they are the manifestation of an inherited inclination to virtue, but, on the other hand, that vice is to be traced to lowly descent.<sup>164</sup>

Gottfried of Strassburg, however, believes in the necessity of education for the development of knightly virtues. Natural disposition, a beautiful body, and wealth are, of course, indispensable,<sup>165</sup> but without the aid of instruction and practice they are unable to bear fruit. A careful education in the art of "pleasing God and the world" is, according to Gottfried, *des edelen herzen amme*.<sup>166</sup>

Friedrich Vogt<sup>167</sup> and Ehrismann<sup>168</sup> have pointed out that *diu edele sēle* of the early mystics supplied the foundation for Gottfried of Strassburg's *Welt der edlen Herzen*. With the mystics, nobility assumed an essentially religious, and somewhat of a symbolic char-

<sup>162</sup> H. Naumann, *Höfische Kultur* (Halle, 1929), 9. K. J. Obenauer says: "In der Idee des vollendeten Ritters ästhetisiert sich der Stand des Adels, indem er, unter dem verfeinernden Einfluss von Kunst, Minne, Spiel und ritterlichem Sport, das ältere, härtere Reckentum überwindet und jede wilde Gebärde ungeselliger, unbeherrschter, unschöner Kraft verpönt. Vor allem ist es das Gebot der „*māze*," in dem dieses ästhetische Ethos der Antike, das Ideal einer stets heiteren, in jeder Lage gefassten, durch und durch gebändigten Humanität wiederersteht." *Die Problematik des ästhetischen Menschen in der deutschen Literatur* (München, 1933), 105. Cf. S. Singer, "Der Geist des Mittelalters," *GRM.* 17 (1929), 85 f.

<sup>163</sup> Wolfram, *Parzival* III, 8 ff.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. F. Vogt, *Bedeutungswandel des Wortes edel* (Marburg, 1909), 10.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. *Tristan* 5701 f.; 2262 ff.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 8006 ff. and 459 ff.; also F. Vogt, *op. cit.*, 11 and 32.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>168</sup> *LG.*, II, 2, 1, p. 308, n. 1.

acter. To the divine origin of the soul was added the idea of a mystic union of the soul with God. The consequence of that union was an exalted purity and beauty, a greater susceptibility for things divine, a higher degree of spiritual nobility. The soul is thought of as an almost corporeal being; she becomes the spouse of Christ. The *Trudperter Hohe Lied* is the first book of German mysticism. With it, says Ehrismann, enters a new spirit into German literature, "aus der Tiefe der Seele heraus dringt sehnüchtiges Verlangen nach einer nur geahnten unaussprechlichen Schönheit."<sup>169</sup> References to this mystical nobility are frequent among the early mystic writers. The soul is the spouse of Christ, she is the *adilvrouwi*; the body is her servant.<sup>170</sup> The virtues are the *edilû kint*, which bring us to God.<sup>171</sup> The contact of the soul with God increases its nobility.<sup>172</sup> Christ becomes *unsir ginôz*.<sup>173</sup>

This emphasis on emotion finds a counterpart in the courtly love of the epical romances. Just as *caritas* is for the mystic the source of all virtues, so love is the ennobling agent for the courtly hero.<sup>174</sup> Hearts, thus ennobled, enjoy the beauties of nature, the song of the birds, everything which is beautiful.<sup>175</sup> Thus we have a nobility in which the aesthetic predominates; in which the chief emphasis is placed on beauty of form and behavior.

There is, moreover, no definite opposition between the secular and the Christian ideal of nobility. Knighthood strives to unite

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 1, p. 39. Cf. K. Burdach, "Nachleben des griechisch-römischen Altertums in der mittelalterlichen Dichtung und Kunst und deren wechselseitige Beziehungen," *Vorspiel* I, 1 (Halle, 1925), 68 ff.

<sup>170</sup>  
Gotis brâth dû sêli *adilvrouwi*,  
vorchti dû der ir dûwi.  
der lîchami ist der sêli *chamerwîb*.

*Summa Theologiae* 27, 1 ff., *MSD.*, 123.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 9 f.

<sup>172</sup> David v. Augsburg, ed. by F. Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker* (Leipzig, 1845), I, 377, 19 f.

<sup>173</sup> *Summa Theologiae* 31, 5, *MSD.*, 124.

<sup>174</sup>  
liebe ist ein also sêlic dinc,  
ein also sêleclich gerinc,  
daz nieman ane ir lere  
noch tugende hat noch ere.

*Tristan und Isold* 187-191.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 549-554. Cf. H. Kissling, *Die Ethik Frauenlobs* (Halle, 1926), 66.

both. "Gott und der Welt zu gefallen" is the chief aim.<sup>176</sup> Knightly virtues refer both to this world and the next. *triuwe* must be shown not only to one's lord or lady, but also to God. *saelde* includes both this world's happiness and that of the world to come. *staete* (as *constantia* and *perseverantia*) provides security against the *instabilitas* and *mutabilitas* of this world, and lends firmness to the soul, making her independent of exterior things, the *vanitas rerum*. Even honor, *êre*, on which the whole code of knightly virtues rests, can be divided into spiritual and worldly honor, both of which must be directed toward God, the *sumum bonum*.<sup>177</sup>

A backward glance reveals the fact that by the end of the twelfth century little is left of the early Germanic concept of nobility. The development of the ideal of nobility tends away from the Germanic and toward the Christian. Feudalism deprived the German noble of his independence; Christianity directed his attention to a common origin and brotherhood; and knighthood, though it reverted to class privileges, made them, nevertheless, accessible to all, for knighthood was no closed order as was the old aristocracy of race. The romances of chivalry surrounded this new nobility with a singular glamor and beauty. But theirs was a poetical world which existed only in imagination, a dream of an ideal which was never to be realized.<sup>178</sup> They represent, however, the typical attitude at the end of the twelfth century, when knighthood was still at its best, and when the ideals for which it stood still constituted the pride of the Christian nobleman.

<sup>176</sup> *Tristan und Isold* 8008-8014.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. A. v. Martin, "Antike, Germanentum, Christentum und Orient als Aufbaufaktoren der geistigen Welt des Mittelalters," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 19 (1929), 332 ff.; G. Ehrismann, "Über Wolframs Ethik," *ZfdA.* 49 (1907-8), 405-465; H. Kissling, *op. cit.*, 43. See also G. Müller, "Gradualismus," *DVjschrLW.* 2 (1924), 699 ff., and H. Brinkmann, "Diesseitsstimmung im Mittelalter," *DVjschrLW.* 2 (1924), 751.

<sup>178</sup> G. Ehrismann says: "Die höfischen Romane sind nicht nur blosses Spiel der Phantasie zur Unterhaltung einer verfeinerten Gesellschaft, es sind Idealbilder, in denen ihre Träume von einer höheren, über die harte Notwendigkeit hinausgehenden Daseinsform verkörpert sind, eine aristocratische Wunschwelt." *LG.* II, 2, 1, 139. Cf. also Fr. Neumann, "Wolfram von Eschenbachs Ritterideal," *DVjschrLW.* 5 (1927), 10 f.; and F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Chivalry and its place in history," *Chivalry*, ed. by E. Prestage (New York, 1928), 20 f.



## CHAPTER II

### THE DIDACTIC WRITERS AND THE FEUDAL NOBILITY OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The opening years of the thirteenth century may well have seemed to promise fair for the future of nobility. Knighthood was then arrayed in its greatest splendor. The Church had given to it her sanction and special blessing, thus raising it to the most exalted position and surrounding it with a nimbus of sacred romance, which made the nobility of this period unique in all history. Its fall, however, was as swift as its rise. We notice the downward trend as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century, and at its close we clearly feel that an epoch of German social history was quickly passing away.

In speaking of nobility, the didactic writers employ the words *adel* and *edel*, the most commonly accepted synonyms for the Latin *nobilitas* and *nobilis*.<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Vogt<sup>2</sup> and Gustav Neckel<sup>3</sup> traced the historical development of these terms, Vogt concentrating largely on the Middle High German period, while Neckel gave valuable data concerning early Germanic times.

The word *adal* is common to all Germanic languages,<sup>4</sup> but its origin is still disputed.<sup>5</sup> Etymologically, it is held to be related to *uodal*, i. e., *erbgut*, (inheritance).<sup>6</sup> Paternal property forms the basis of the Germanic family, and *adalboran* is he who is born on or for the *uodal*. He is the *adaling*, the one who belongs to

<sup>1</sup> *Nobilitas* in classical times meant almost exclusively "noble birth," and *nobilis* was never used in the ethical sense; *bonus*, *probus*, *generosus*, *liberalis*, *ingenuus*, but especially *honestus* served to indicate moral nobility. Cf. J. Ph. Krebs, *Antibarbarus der lateinischen Sprache*, 7. Aufl. by J. H. Schmalz (Basel, 1905), II, 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Bedeutungswandel des Wortes edel*, Rektoratsrede vom 18. Okt. 1908 (Marburg, 1909).

<sup>3</sup> "Adel und Gefolgschaft," *PBB.* 41 (1916), 385-436.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 385. Cf. also A. Walde, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen*, ed. by J. Pokorny (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1930), I, 44.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.* and Fr. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 10 Aufl. (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1924), 7 and 109. See also Ph. Heck, *Die Gemeinfreien der Karolingischen Volksrechte* (Halle, 1900), 38 ff.

<sup>6</sup> "*adal* ist nichts anderes als *uodal* gewesen." G. Neckel, *loc. cit.*, 390.

the *adel*, the proprietor or co-proprietor of the *erbgut*.<sup>7</sup> With the family we must associate certain characteristics which depend, to some extent, upon the size and kind of the family property. Thus a personal or qualitative element enters in, which gradually takes on the idea of excellence.<sup>8</sup>

In the same manner the adjective *edel* referred from the beginning to property and descent,<sup>9</sup> while in its more restricted sense it conveyed the idea of superiority or innate goodness. According to Neckel, the *edel man* was originally the *adales man* without the qualitative meaning. But because the *adales man* as such was looked upon as an excellent man, he became the excellent man.<sup>10</sup>

The degree of excellence or superiority depended on the family. Thus a connection is established between *Adel* and *Geschlecht*. Certain families prided themselves on their superiority, their greater possessions, power, and influence, and raised themselves above the commonalty by claiming special rights and privileges. It has been already noted that the Greeks called their nobility *εὐγενής*, which Wulfila translated by *godakunds*, of good parentage.<sup>11</sup> The expression *wol geboren*, which appears in *Winsbecke*<sup>12</sup> and in *Freidank*,<sup>13</sup> goes back to the same idea, as does *hōch geburt*, which is also used occasionally.<sup>14</sup>

A man thus raised above his fellow men by descent was looked up to and honored. The outward signs of honor were titles and privileges. These were often bestowed by rulers or people upon those who had no *natural* right to them, because they were not of noble descent. This gave rise to a nobility of merit or worth as distinguished from the nobility of birth. Personal excellence was thus ennobled by the conferring of titles and privileges. Honor,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 394; also C. C. Uhlenbeck, "Zum gotischen Wortschatz," *PBB*. 30 (1905), 286.

<sup>8</sup> Vogt holds that the notion of excellence was not contained in the original concept of *Adel*. Cf. *op. cit.*, 5. See, however, G. Neckel, *loc. cit.*, 408.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. Walde, *op. cit.*, 44, and G. Neckel, *loc. cit.*, 429.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 433.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. V. Velten, *JEGPh*. 29 (1930), 334.

<sup>12</sup> 28, 5.

<sup>13</sup> 54, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Winsbecke* 28, 1; *Renner* 1248; 1260.

in Middle High German, *êre*, became synonymous with nobility or *adel*, and is often used in this sense by the didactic writers. They shift back and forth between the honor which means reputation and that which means nobility. Freidank, in his chapter *Von der Ehre*<sup>15</sup> uses *êre* either in the subjective sense signifying a noble character, the sum and substance of all inner merits, the *honestum* of Cicero,<sup>16</sup> or in the objective sense of being honored.<sup>17</sup> In the latter instance *êre* becomes identical with praise, name, honorable position, or rank. The other writers do the same, and it is often difficult to determine the sense in which *êre* is employed.<sup>18</sup>

The most common terms to designate nobility are *adel* and *edel*. They are used by all the writers with the exception of the author of the *Winsbecke*, and they stand practically for the whole gamut of meanings. Freidank evidently thinks of nobility in the sense of noble birth as well as excellence, when he says:

Swer rehte tuot derst wol geborn:  
ân tugent ist *adel* gar verlorn. (54, 6 f.)

Then he speaks of a nobility acquired by virtue, which has no legal title to prove its validity.

Er sî eigen oder fri,  
der von geburt niht *edel* sî,  
der sol sich *edel* machen  
mit tugentlichen sachen. (54, 8 ff.)

He applies the adjective *edel* to a golden vessel (15, 26d) as well as to the children of nobles (29, 9 and 49, 18). Thomasin stresses the personal quality when he mentions *edele vürstn* (11731; 11775), the *edel künic Friderich* (11787), *edele ritterschaft* (11360). He goes so far as to talk of a *muotes adel* (3864) and does not hesitate to speak of the *edelen arzât* (5086), the *edel Divinitas* (9124), the *edeln gesteine* (1475). Hugo of Trimberg is just as free in his use of the terms. He comes very close to the original

<sup>15</sup> *Bescheidenheit*, 91, 12-94.

<sup>16</sup> 91, 20 ff.; 92, 9-16; 93, 18.

<sup>17</sup> 91, 12 ff.; 92, 3-8; 92, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. G. Ehrismann, "Die Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems," *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 155 f., and 165; also, *LG.* II, 2 (München, 1927), 20; H. Kissling, *Die Ethik Frauenlobs* (Halle, 1926), 24 ff.

meaning of *adel*, i. e., property, possession, when he refers to *des heiligen geistes adel* (8949), having in mind the Church, which satan is trying to appropriate and pervert.

Want of discrimination in the choice of terms referring to nobility is a significant characteristic of the didactic writers. They neither cared about philological exactness nor did they trouble themselves about legal distinctions. They were first and foremost preachers, and as such were not concerned so much with what nobility meant according to law, tradition, and custom as with what it ought to mean; therefore, they connected the ideal with current titles of privilege, following in this respect their classical authorities.<sup>19</sup> The indiscriminate use of these sources accounts largely for the confusion of terms and for the various meanings applied to the words *Adel* and *edel*. What Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca had to say about nobility was mingled with the teachings of Christian religion and the precepts of the Bible, and applied to existing social conditions.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, we are able to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the nobility of the time, if we consider *Adel* from the viewpoint of social distinction, i. e., a nobility conferred by society to signify superiority.

The picture of German nobility drawn by the didactic poets presents the intricate relationships, the rights and privileges, the faults and shortcomings of the feudal aristocracy of the thirteenth century. Medieval society was usually divided into three classes: clergy, nobility, and the common people.<sup>21</sup> Freidank says:

Got hât driu leben geschaffen,  
gebûre ritter unde pfaffen: (27, 1 f.)

Hugo of Trimberg has the same division of classes.<sup>22</sup> Thomasin does not enumerate them directly, but constantly refers to one or the other in his moral treatise. The author of the *Winsbecke* con-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. F. Vogt, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Introduction, 13.

<sup>21</sup> For a treatment of this social attitude see P. Guilhiermoz, *Essai sur l'origine de la noblesse en France au moyen âge*, 348-49, 357-58, 370-74; and R. Mohl, *The three estates in medieval and Renaissance literature* (New York, 1933), with additional bibliographical references.

<sup>22</sup> Renner 2214, 8030, 9703, 13818, 19853. Cf. G. Ehrismann, "Die mittelhochdeutsche didaktische Literatur als Gesellschaftsethik," *Deutschkundliches*, ed. by H. Teske (Heidelberg, 1930), 38 and 42.

cerns himself with knighthood only. He is a respected nobleman<sup>23</sup> as well as a knight,<sup>24</sup> and has the highest regard for knighthood,<sup>25</sup> which is above nobility itself since its privileges were not hereditary. A knight was considered a nobleman, but not every nobleman was a knight.<sup>26</sup> The son in the *Winsbecke* had not yet received knighthood,<sup>27</sup> but was preparing himself for it.

The father in the *Winsbecke* is convinced that knighthood as such is good, though it may happen that now and then an unworthy man, *ein tumber man* (17, 8), who enters its sacred precincts does not live up to his calling. That, however, does not detract from its excellence—

dâ ist der schilt unschuldic an. (17, 10)

Thomasin, too, has a high regard for knighthood. He states that his book is intended for knights and clergy.<sup>28</sup> The knight is above all a warrior; he must fight for justice and right.<sup>29</sup> Any

<sup>23</sup> He says to his son:

sît ich von êrste hûses phlac,  
dâ kom ich nie von einen tac.  
mîn umbesaezen wîzzen wol,  
wie dô mîn wort in êren lac. (48, 4 ff.)

<sup>24</sup> He has broken many a spear in knightly exercises (20, 7).

<sup>25</sup> Sun, dû solt wîzzen, daz der schilt  
hât werdekeit und êren vil:  
den ritter tugende niht bevilt,  
der im ze rehte volgen wil.  
die wârheit ich dich niht enhil:  
er ist zer werlte sunder wân  
ein hôchgemezzen vreuden zil. (17, 1 ff.)

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ch. Seignobos, *The Feudal Régime* (New York, 1902), 32.

<sup>27</sup> The father says:

Sun, lât dich got geleben die zît,  
daz er mit rehte wirt dîn dach (18, 1 f.).

Regarding the ceremonies see J. Petersen, *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe*, ch. XI, "Ritterschlag und Ritterpflichten," 155-164 with additional references.

<sup>28</sup> vrume rîtr und guote vrouwen  
und wîse phaffen suln dich schouwen.  
(*Wälsche Gast* 14695 f.)

<sup>29</sup> sô sol dar nâch der rîter wert  
an guoten dingen sîn swert  
gebiderben unde amme rehte. (*Ibid.*, 8671 ff.)

knight would gladly give body, property, and family for his feudal lord.<sup>30</sup> Thomasin speaks of the *edele ritterschaft* (11360), and is lavish in his praise of German knighthood when he exhorts the German knights to take part in the crusade.<sup>31</sup> The rulers, however, i. e., the great feudal lords, lay as well as clerical, whom Thomasin styles *herren*, are higher in the social scale than knights in general, and therefore more is expected of them.<sup>32</sup> In war they are the leaders of the knights (6657), and Thomasin says that if through their folly the army is conquered and led captive, they deserve to be treated worse than their knights (6658 ff.).

Freidank has nothing particular to say about the institution of knighthood. Under the term *ritter* he includes all the upper classes of society, and so does Hugo of Trimberg. The latter, however, makes two distinct references to the ceremony of initiation. He says that the blessing which the knight receives is the

30                    swer unserm herren wolde nemen  
                       sin lant, wir wägen unsern lîp,  
                       unser guot, kint unde wîp,  
                       und wertenz nâch unser kraft,            (*Ibid.*, 11436 ff.)

31                    Vernim mir, tiuschiu ritterschaft:  
                       ich weiz wol daz dîn kraft  
                       und dîn lop ist gebreitet wît,  
                       wan du bist zaller zît  
                       diu tiurest ritterschaft gewesen  
                       von der wir an den buochen lesen.    (*Ibid.*, 11347 ff.)

German knighthood was greatly esteemed for its valor at home and abroad. Cf. J. Wagner, "Äusserungen deutschen Nationalgefühls am Ausgang des Mittelalters," *DVjschrLW.* 9 (1931), 395. — Cf. also H. Teske, *Thomasin von Zerclaere* (Heidelberg, 1933), 207, note 943.

32 Thomasin says:

                      swaz den rîter lastert gar,  
                       dâ wirt der herre niht von gêrt,  
                       wan swaz des rîters ist unwert,  
                       daz kumt niht dem herren wol,  
                       und swaz den herren zieren sol,  
                       daz muoz gezierde dem rîter sîn.  
                       hie sult ir nu merken bî,  
                       sît lûge dem rîter übel stêt,  
                       dem herrn si an sîn êre gêt.            (2006 ff.)

same for the poor shepherd's son as for the powerful noble.<sup>33</sup> Referring again to this special blessing, he puts knighthood in the category with two sacraments—holy orders and matrimony:

Wort habent der kristenheite geben  
Ritter, pfaffen und êlich leben: (22205 f.)

The knight's duty is to manage the horse (13905 ff.) and to fight (13912). He must be brave and not run away like a coward, as so often happens today (13914). His special obligation is to protect the farmer.<sup>34</sup> Hugo also refers to knights fighting for pay.<sup>35</sup> The principal accusation advanced against knighthood in general is pride.<sup>36</sup>

Aside from these references to knighthood, the didactic poets take a definite stand toward feudal nobility in general. Hugo says that the whole nobility is affected by pride.<sup>37</sup> It is noteworthy that he mentions the entire feudal nobility according to rank, stating that its members are of noble birth.<sup>38</sup> Freidank, too, ridicules the pride of the nobles, saying that many a one imagines *er si ein got*

“ Und hête ein armer hirte ein kint  
Daz man ze ritter sôlte segên,  
Diu wort wêrn als hôhe gewegen  
Mit den man in ze ritter mechte,  
Als ob er hête tûsent knehte: Renner 19070 ff.

It often happened that men from below, of servile birth and condition, were raised to the dignity of knighthood. Cf. J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany* (Chicago, 1928), 323 and instances cited in footnote. Knighthood thus became in reality a profession or state of merit.

“ Die ritter sûln bûliute vertreten  
Mit schirme, Renner 2215 f.

Cf. Fritz Meyer, *Die Stände, ihr Leben und Treiben* dargestellt aus den afzr. Artus- und Abenteuerromanen, Diss. (Marburg, 1888), 11.

“ Um solt siht man die ritter vehte, Renner 22850.

“ Hôchfart lît an ritterschaft, Ibid., 475.

“ Kaiser, kûnige und herzogen,  
Grâfen, fûrsten unde frien  
Sûln über sich selber wâfen schrien,  
Daz si von adel sint geborn  
Und leider hulde hânt gesworn  
Hôchferte und vil maniger untugent,  
Die si nu lernent ûf von jugent: (524 ff.)

“ Daz si von adel sint geborn Ibid., 527.

(29, 19) when others bow and fall down before him. In admonishing the nobility to take part in the crusade, Thomasin addresses first the knights (11347 ff.), then the princes (11731 ff.), and finally the leader of the German princes, the *edel künec Friderich* (11787). The princes were many in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, ranging from those having jurisdiction over large states to the very insignificant princelings who governed merely a few villages.<sup>39</sup>

Freidank advocates the necessity of a strong, centralized kingly power which would keep these princes under control and prevent them from becoming too powerful.<sup>40</sup> Hugo is of the same opinion and quotes Freidank almost verbatim.<sup>41</sup>

With great frankness the writers expose the faults and shortcomings of the princes. Freidank blames them very severely in several instances,<sup>42</sup> and condemns them especially for their avarice. These nobles would like to claim a monopoly even of God's gifts, sun, wind, and rain.<sup>43</sup> Hugo follows him in this<sup>44</sup> and also states

<sup>39</sup> Cf. G. v. Below, "Die unfreie Herkunft des niederen Adels," *Historische Zeitschrift* 135 (1927), 421.

<sup>40</sup>                    Lant und liute geirret sint,  
                      swâ der künec ist ein kint  
                      und sich die fürsten flizent  
                      daz si fruo enbîzent;                    *Bescheidenheit* 72, 1 ff.

<sup>41</sup>                    „Wê dem lande, des herre ein kint  
                      Ist und an guoten wîzen blint,  
                      Und des fürsten sich des flizent  
                      Daz si gerne fruo enbîzent!“                    *Renner* 2137 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Bescheidenheit* 63, 6 f.; 72, 25; 73, 4 f.; 73, 12-15; 78, 4 a-d.

<sup>43</sup>                    die fürsten twingent mit gewalt  
                      velt steine wazzer unde walt,  
                      dar zuo wilt unde zam:  
                      dem lufte taetens gerne alsam;  
                      der muoz uns noch gemeine sîn.  
                      möhtens uns der sunnen schîn  
                      verbieten, wint auch unde regen,  
                      man müese in zins mit golde wegen.                    *Ibid.*, 76, 5 ff.

<sup>44</sup>                    Und möhten si des wazzers fluz,  
                      der wolken guz, des luftes duz,  
                      der sterne glast, der sunnen schîn  
                      Enthaben und vor uns sperren in,  
                      Si têtentz gerne.                    *Renner* 21367 ff.



that many a rich prince is living from the exploitation of the poor.<sup>45</sup> Another great fault of the princes is rivalry. According to Freidank (73, 8 f.), their desire for equal power is disturbing the peace of the land. It would be well with the country if all the princes lived in harmony.<sup>46</sup>

Thomasin stresses above all the moral obligation of the rulers. Land and people are intrusted to them and they must give a good example (1717 f.). If the rulers are bad, everybody suffers in consequence. They should let their light shine (8241 ff.), and preserve the land from harm (8257 ff.). As the sun gives light to the moon, so do they impart goodness to others (6642 ff.). He criticizes their shortcomings with the same earnestness as Freidank and Hugo. The emperor Otto has justly been punished by God, Who had given him power and honor (6250).<sup>47</sup> Through his overweening pride Otto has failed against justice, the necessary basis of all power, and therefore he has no right to rule others.<sup>48</sup> He has deservedly lost the power of an emperor and the privileges of a king (3424 ff.). Thomasin blames the *herren* for their *unstaete*, i. e., lack of stability,<sup>49</sup> and attributes much of the evil in the world to it.<sup>50</sup> He knows of a count who has lost his earldom

- “ Almuosen manigen fürsten nert,  
Daz er in höher wurde vert; *Ibid.*, 2343 f.  
“ Daz rîche stüende dicke guot,  
und haeten s'alle glîchen muot: *Bescheidenheit* 76, 27 f.

*Cf.* F. Sandvoss, *Anmerkungen*, 219 f.

<sup>47</sup> Otto IV was deposed at the Lateran Council 1215. *Cf.* C. J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, V, 2. Aufl. (Freiburg i. Br., 1886), 874.

- “ Swer sîn hêrschaft alsô hât  
daz er nâch rehte niene gât,  
der hât mit unreht sîn hêrschaft:  
uns tuot gewalt ouch sîn kraft.  
*Wâlsche Gast* 6267 ff.

*Cf.* H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 195.

- “ Waz ist unstaete? herren schande,  
irresal in allem lande. *Wâlsche Gast* 1837 f.,  
and again:  
diu staete diu ist gar verlorn  
von ir willn und von ir schulde: *Ibid.*, 2126 f.  
“ jâ ist uns dicke worden schîn  
daz der unstaeten herren muot  
vil in der werlde unstaete tuot. *Ibid.*, 2144 ff.

through heresy (3416), of a margrave who has been deprived of his mark (3419), and of a duke who has forfeited his duchy (3420).<sup>51</sup> But what happened to them was just retribution—the punishment for their *unstaete*.

Feudal nobility as a class stood between the emperor and the common people. It comprised the princes as well as the petty nobles who had risen from servile position and filled the ranks of the *ministeriales*.<sup>52</sup> Thomasin speaks of them all. He is interested in the most powerful who can proudly affirm:

‘ich hân herren niht’: (7887),

down to the poor *ministeriale* without property, who is sorry that he has not learned a trade (8159 ff.), who has to do what his lord tells him (7982 f.), and who sighs discontentedly:

‘waer ich ein herre’ (3137).

Freidank has little use for the intricacies of the feudal system. He says:

Swær allez muoz ermieten,  
der mac niht vil gebieten. (77, 26 f.)

Too much subservience is not conducive to the engendering of *hohen muot* (78, 1 f.). A nobleman should have sufficient property to live up to his *hêrren namen* (78, 4). However, feudal nobility has its rightful place in the social order. Freidank deems it wrong for anyone whose name and honor are derived from his fief to be ashamed of the service which he is required to render, saying that the only nobility which is free from the obligation of service is nobility of birth.<sup>53</sup> Hugo of Trimberg quotes Freidank,<sup>54</sup> and adds

<sup>51</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 193 and footnotes.

<sup>52</sup> An excellent treatise on the political aspect of the *ministeriales* is given by G. v. Below, *loc. cit.*, 415-422. — Cf. also J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany*, 323-25, 328-30; Ph. Heck, “Der Ursprung der sächsischen Dienstmannschaft,” *Vierteljahrschrift für Social- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 5 (1907), 116-172; Ch. Seignobos, *The Feudal Régime* (New York, 1902), 48 f.

<sup>53</sup>

Swâ von ein man sin êre hât,  
schamt er sich des, deist missetât.  
man siht sich vil der liute schamen  
ir êren und ir besten namen.

that he who wishes to get the benefit of his profession should also be satisfied with it.<sup>55</sup> Toward the close of his work, Hugo reverts to this same idea and gives four reasons why a man might conceal his name: either he is a saint (21493) and out of humility wishes to remain unknown, or he is an impostor (21494), or, perhaps, he may have done something wrong through which he forfeited his honorable name (21495 f.), or his family may be of ill repute (21497 f.).<sup>56</sup>

None of the writers contests the right of the feudal lord over his tenants, although all of them inveigh against oppression and abuses. Hugo enjoins justice on the lord in not taking more from his subjects than is due to him.<sup>57</sup> He feels sorry for the poor tenant, who, harshly treated by his master, runs away from his service, leaving many a field uncared for.<sup>58</sup> Hugo has a special dis-

êst lützel namen âne schamen  
wan hêrren unde frouwen namen.

*Bescheidenheit* 53, 9 ff.

“ Swâ von ein man sîn êre hât,  
Schemt er sich des, daz ist missetât: *Renner* 3181 f.

“ Swer sînes ordens wil geniezen,  
Den sol sînes ordens niht verdriezen. *Ibid.*, 3187 f.

“ Swem leit ist daz man in bekennet  
Und sîn geslehte vor im nennet,  
Der ist eintweder ein heilic man,  
Oder nimt sich valscher êren an,  
Oder hât vil lîhte diu dinc getân  
Von den er guot und êre muoz lân,  
Oder sîn geslehte ist sô bekant  
Von boesem liumunt über lant. *Ibid.*, 21491 ff.

“ . . . mære denne er *se rehte*  
Nemen sol. *Ibid.*, 2209.

and: Swer *uber reht* arme liute twinget (2221);

cf. also 3756.

“ Manic arm man sînen herren fîuhet:  
Swenne er sich vîntlich gein im rîuhet  
Und im sîn guot wil an gewinnen,  
Sô muoz er durch nôt entrinnen:  
Des lît manic acker ungebûwet;  
Swenne armen liuten gein den grûwet,  
Die billich si beschirmen sôlten  
Ob si daz reht ansehen wôlten: *Ibid.*, 4695 ff.;

cf. also 15220 ff.

like for the *vögte*. Though originally intended for the protection of both Church and state, they degenerated and became rather oppressors of the poor.<sup>59</sup> Like Hugo Freidank complains:

gerihte voget münze zol  
die wurden ê durch guot erdâht,  
nû sint sie gar ze roube brâht. (75, 25 ff.);

but Hugo is still more vehement in his denunciations.<sup>60</sup>

He also strongly opposes the feudal nobility within the Church. Few of the higher clergy are concerned about holiness, for

. . . wertlich êre verkêrt ir vil, (797).

It is to gain honor that they enter the Church.<sup>61</sup> With characteristic directness he states the reason for his opposition to the feudal position of the clergy. These prince-bishops, he avers, have greater care for the good of the land than for the salvation of souls.<sup>62</sup> He likewise condemns the holding of remunerative Church offices by children.<sup>63</sup>

Freidank is less outspoken. He says once that *mîlte*, meaning here liberality, is found neither in the palaces of bishops nor at the

<sup>59</sup> Concerning their origin as well as the nature of their office see J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany*, 6-8, 41, 512-14, and Otto Freiherrn v. Dungern, *Der Herrenstand im Mittelalter I* (Papiermühle, 1908), 303 ff. K. D. Hüllmann speaks of the terrible abuses which were prevalent under the administration of the *Vögte*. Cf. *Geschichte des Ursprungs der Stände in Deutschland*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1830), 257 ff.; cf. also Ch. Seignobos, *op. cit.*, 47 f.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Renner 8917 ff.; 9238 ff.; 9264 f.; 9283 ff.; 1755 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Und geistlich man oder pfaffe wirt,  
Daz er müge werltliche êre erwerben, *Ibid.*, 4242 f.

<sup>62</sup> Nu müezen si vil mêre gerften,  
Wâ si liute und lant beschirmen  
Denne wâ si predigen, wîhen, firmen. *Ibid.*, 2396 ff.

He complains about them in numerous other places. Cf. 825 ff.; 981 ff.; 2017 ff.; 2486 f.; 4211 ff.; 4275 ff.; 20553 ff.; 21894 f. Cf. R. Limmer, *Bildungszustände und Bildungsideen des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (München, 1928), 82 ff.

<sup>63</sup> Daz man aber kint nu machet rîch  
Wider got mit gotes gâben,  
Ê denne si kunst oder alter haben,  
Daz ist niht guot ob man daz tuot: *Ibid.*, 10920 ff.

great courts.<sup>64</sup> Thomasin has no arguments against the feudal clergy as such. He knows that everything is not as it should be, but then the rest of the world is suffering from similar disorders. Friuli was a feudal state resembling the great ecclesiastical principalities of Germany. The patriarch, then Wolfger of Passau,<sup>65</sup> the lord of the land, was a prince-bishop. Thomasin clearly distinguishes between his spiritual and political powers. He cannot preside as judge in secular law courts, since canon law and secular law are mutually exclusive.<sup>66</sup> In his secular jurisdiction a lay person must represent him.<sup>67</sup> Thus Thomasin recognizes the necessity of the *advocatus* or *Vogt* against whom Hugo and Freidank are so embittered. Thomasin stresses also the obligation which the prince-bishop has of ruling his country to the best of his ability. His eyes and his heart should be broader than his land; he should have such control of his temporal power that he may raise the position of the deserving and suppress the undesirable.<sup>68</sup>

An important factor in the feudal system is the *rât* or council.

“ Biscolve lèrent milte niht:  
größen höven sam geschiht; *Bescheidenheit* 87, 6 f.;

cf. also F. Sandvoss, *Anmerkungen*, 232 f.

<sup>66</sup> Concerning Wolfger and his court see H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 13-40.

“ . . . ir sult wizzen daz  
swer hât geistlich geriht,  
der sol werltlich rihten nicht.  
swer ouch richtet werltlichen,  
der sol niht rihten geistlichen,  
ern habe danne diu amt  
von sinem rehte beidiu samt. *Wälsche Gast* 12806 ff.

<sup>67</sup> Ist daz ein bischolf herzoge ist,  
der sol haben zaller vrist  
sinen rihtaere der tegelfche  
rihte den liuten werltliche. *Ibid.*, 12849 ff.;

cf. J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany* 7, and especially H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 108 f.

“ sîn ougen und sîn herze sol  
breiter sîn dan sîn lant.  
sîn lant sol sîn in sîner hant,  
wan die übeln sol er verdrücken  
und die guoten zuo zim rücken.  
*Wälsche Gast* 12802 ff.

All the writers affirm its necessity.<sup>69</sup> The *râtgeben* are vassals who hold a fief from their overlord. They are obliged to do as their lord wishes,<sup>70</sup> or they will forfeit their right to the fief.<sup>71</sup> This servile anxiety to please the lord at all times, even should he be in the wrong, breeds evil councilors, who bring much misery to the country, as Hugo points out in his section on *boesen râtgeben* (2149 ff.). Any prince, says Freidank, may be known by his council, since

der wise suochet wisen rât,  
der tøre sich nâch tören hât. (72. 13 f.)<sup>79</sup>

Hugo of Trimberg complains that God-fearing men are seldom found in the *fürsten rät* (768), nor is there any place for poor nobles.<sup>73</sup> When Thomasin speaks of the poor and the rich who are in the council of the prince, he evidently has in mind the rich, powerful vassals and the *ministeriales*, or dependents. Thomasin says the ruler should take advice from both (13041 ff.), from the young as well as from the old (13066 f.), and after he has heard them all, he should weigh their opinions and then decide for himself what is best.<sup>74</sup> Much depends upon the trustworthiness of the

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Renner 2127 ff.; Freidank 158, 8 ff.; Wälsche Gast 12996 ff. The author of the *Winsbecke* also advocates following the council of wise friends (34, 1 ff.), and if there is a difference of opinion, the best should be followed (34, 8 ff.); also 35, 1 f.

70                    Sögetâner herren râtgeben  
                      Mûezen nâch irem willen leben,  
                      Wenne si von in belêhent sint                    Renner 2141 ff.

71 Und fürhtent, daz ir wip und ir kint  
Gar verderbet werden von in. *Ibid.*, 2144 f.

<sup>72</sup> Hugo says:  
Ein rein man hât gern rein gesinde. *Renner* 753.

<sup>73</sup> Armuot manige unwirde hât,  
Man nimt si selten an fürsten rât; *Ibid.*, 23113 f.

er sol eins iegelfichen rât  
in sinen muot nemen: swenner hât  
daz getân, er sol ersehen .  
welhem rât er müge jehen  
daz er der beste rât si  
und neme den ode dâ bi  
einn andern, dunket er in guot:

*Wälsche Gast 13071 ff.*

councilors. The unreliable *jähêrren*, the medieval "yes-men," fool their lord by their hypocritical praise, according to Freidank.<sup>75</sup>

The attitude of the didactic writers toward the poor nobility is also of interest. Freidank speaks of nobles who have a title but no property (42, 23 f. and 57, 10). With the rich, powerful nobles (40, 13) he contrasts the poor nobility so deserving of sympathy (40, 16).<sup>76</sup> The rich nobles have many friends (40, 17), while the poor are looked down upon (41, 1). If a man loses his possessions, he loses his friends with them (41, 2 f.). Therefore, he advises the poor man to be wise and remain silent about his poverty in order to keep his friends (41, 4 ff.). Hugo, too, has pity for *gar nôtige herren* (15247). Thomasin advocates a greater reliance on the lower nobility. A poor noble who is at court, he says, can often be of greater service with his advice than a strong vassal to whom a message must be sent (13049 ff.).<sup>77</sup>

Intruders, however, who force their way into the ranks of the nobles, find but little sympathy. Freidank speaks of the *armen herren* in comparison with the *richen kneht*: those, namely, who have riches but who are not noble from Freidank's viewpoint, even though they may have acquired honorable positions.<sup>78</sup> None give greater offense than these upstarts.<sup>79</sup> Hugo agrees with him<sup>80</sup> and ridicules especially the *halpritter* (1467 ff.), who in their origin resemble more the farmer than the knight. They live among the nobles, but their manners are not those of noblemen. They are the children of a misalliance, the mother being of noble descent, the father a farmer. He graphically sets forth their position (1525 ff.) in the fable of the mule.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Freidank 50, 2 ff.; 72, 7 f.; 72, 9 f.; 72, 15 f. Cf. also *Wälsche Gast* 13177 ff.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. F. Sandvoss, *Anmerkungen*, 187.

<sup>77</sup> The same sentiment is expressed in Freidank's proverb:

Ein friunt ist nützer nâhe bi  
dan verre zwêne oder dri. (95, 14 f.).

<sup>78</sup> Man êrt nû leider richen kneht  
für armen hêrren âne reht. *Bescheidenheit* 56, 27 f.

<sup>79</sup> Sô swache liute werdent rich,  
sost niht sô unvertregelfch. *Ibid.*, 41, 8 f.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Renner 5255 f.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. K. Francke, *Social forces in German literature* (New York, 1896),

Hugo censures also the universal striving for higher rank. Scholars, no longer satisfied with learning, would be nobles (21512); discontented monks, abbots (21514); unruly nuns, abbesses (21515); servants, ladies (21517 f.).<sup>82</sup> The world, according to Freidank, has become so foolish as to look upon *kleine guot*, i. e., property, empty pomp, etc., as nobility,<sup>83</sup> while Hugo with significant irony points out the road to honor: luxurious garments (17881), pretended learning (17882), or feigned riches (17884) will safely bring any man to the desired goal; should these fail, there is a shorter and more secure way—the clerical robe.<sup>84</sup>

The didactic poets are convinced that there is something wrong with the nobility of their time. Hugo in particular searches for the cause of this defection. He, the keen observer of conditions, the typical schoolmaster, knows that it is education, instruction,

125 f.; E. Seemann, "Hugo von Trimberg und die Fabeln seines Renners," *Münchener Archiv* 6 (1923), 126 f.—Farmers' sons could also obtain knighthood for money. This practice was still prevalent in the thirteenth century despite the attempt of the Hohenstaufen Frederick to exclude them as well as the clergy from knighthood. Cf. O. Piper, *Burgenkunde*, 3. Aufl. (München, 1912), 21.

Fürsten, ritter und arme liute  
 Trahtent alle gerne hiute  
 Wie si sich wol gefriunden ûf erden  
 Mit irn kinden, daz diu werden  
 Höch von edelem geslehte: *Renner 23331 ff.*

88      Diu werlt ist leider sô gemuot,  
si nîmt fûr adel ein kleine guot.  
*Bescheidenheit* 32, 11 f.

Swer wil daz rîche liute in grûezen  
Und arme im nîgen ze den fûezen  
Und daz die fûrsten in bekennen  
Und meister in oder herre nennen:  
Der kleide sich schône und neme sich an,  
Daz er mêr künne denne er kan  
Und daz er mêr habe denne er hât,  
Sô nimt man in an tiefen rât.  
Swer niht mac kûmen ze dirre tât,  
Der lege an sich geistliche wât,  
Sô wirt er werder in kurzer frist  
Denne jene ie wurden, der kint er ist.



the bringing-up of youth, which is amiss.<sup>85</sup> He believes that it is not merely blood nor heritage which distinguishes the noble from the common man, but that training also plays an important part. He does not, indeed, ignore the influence of heredity,<sup>86</sup> yet he avers that some of those on the way to becoming robber-knights could be saved for society and a better life, had their youthful training prepared them for it.<sup>87</sup> Formerly, Hugo says, great care was exercised in the education of the nobleman's son. He was sent away to a foreign court to learn *zuht und êre* (541).<sup>88</sup> But now court life has so degenerated that a tavern would be as fit a place for rearing a child as the castle of a nobleman.<sup>89</sup> Hugo tells us

Swâ aber nu pfaffen und leien jugent  
Wirt erzogen an alle tugent,  
Bî den sûln leider lant und liute  
Selten sich gebezzen hiute: *Renner* 11153 ff.;

Freidank says:

swer schalkeit lernet in der jugent,  
der enhât niht staeter tugent.

*Bescheidenheit* 143, 5 f.

Concerning the educational conditions and ideas of the thirteenth century, see R. Limmer, *Bildungszustände und Bildungsideen des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (München, 1928). The study is based principally on Latin sources with an occasional reference to the German didactic writings.

<sup>85</sup> He says:

Man bekennet den boum bî sîner fruht. *Renner* 7002,

and

Der boese tuot nimmer frumeclichen  
Noch der frume lesterlichen: *Ibid.*, 7043 f.,

also

Ein ieglich obez smecket vil rehte,  
Swie verre manz füert, nâch sînem geslehte:  
Sam tuont die liute arm und rîche  
Alle gern irm geslehte gelfche. *Ibid.*, 17653 ff.

<sup>87</sup>

Ir etslichez würde vil lîhte guot,  
Wêr ez bî liuten in der jugent  
Die zuht ez lêrten unde tugent: *Ibid.*, 6988 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Regarding this custom as well as the details of training, see J. Diefenbacher, *Deutsches Leben im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* I (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1919), 45-49; J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, ch. X, 142-154; A. Schultz, *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger* (Leipzig, 1889), I, 156 ff.

<sup>89</sup>

Wîlent dô die herren sâzen  
Und ir brôt mit êren âzen

that he was twice a guest at the royal court and that he thoroughly disapproves the mode of living and the luxury and extravagance he found there.<sup>90</sup>

Freidank seems to be of the same opinion, for he says:

Liegen triegen werder sint  
ze hove dan der fürsten kint. (166, 25 f.),

and again:

Swâ schalke magezogen sint,  
dâ verderbent edeliu kint. (49, 17 f.).

The author of the *Winsbecke* and Thomasin show an entirely different attitude. With them the court is still the ideal place for a nobleman's son. There *zuht und reine tugent* are held in esteem,<sup>91</sup> and youth is in the company of the best.<sup>92</sup> Thomasin deems it a

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Vor irm gesinde ansêzeclich  
In gotes namen zûhticlich,  
Dô wart manic edel kint gesant  
Von einem lande in daz ander lant,  
Daz ez zuht und êre  
Nâch frumer herren lêre  
Sôlte lernen in sîner jugent,  
Dâ von im lop, sêlde und tugent  
Gar âne missewende  
Beklibe biz an sîn ende:  
Nu ist sô manic boeser site,  
Der manigen herren volget mite  
Die gar sint an zûhten blint,  
Daz ein edel man sîn kint  
Môhte vil nâch alsô gerne  
Von im senden in ein taberne  
Als ze den herren, der gesinde  
Nâch unzûhten trahet swinde.

*Renner* 535 ff.;

cf. F. A. Specht, *Geschichte des Unterrichtswesens in Deutschland von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1885), 239 f.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Renner* 4719 ff.; 5509 ff.; and 710 ff.

<sup>91</sup> Sun, wiltû kleiden dîne jugent,  
daz si ze hove in êren gê,  
snît an dich zuht und reine tugent.

*Winsbecke*, 22, 1 ff.

<sup>92</sup> Sun, dû solt bî den werden sîn  
und lâ ze hove dringen dich.

*Ibid.*, 23, 1 f.

great wrong to deprive a child of the advantages of a sojourn at court (9291 ff.). School and court are the two educational agencies for the upper classes, and Thomasin seems to consider them of equal importance. It is not very clear what type of school Thomasin had in mind, yet from one passage it may be inferred that he is speaking of castle schools. Under the direction of learned masters, the sons of the suzerain were brought up and trained in company with the sons of vassals. Here noble youth was to be instructed in the virtues essential to the nobleman, in courtly behavior and virtuous conduct, as well as in the rudiments of learning.<sup>93</sup> Freidank agrees that, for anyone claiming an honorable name, such an education is most needful.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Thomasin writes:

Nu waz würrē den vrūmen herren  
daz si ir kint hiezen lēren?  
swenn sis dā lāzent spilen gēn,  
sō solt mans lēren ze verstēn  
waz übel stüende ode wol  
und wes man gerne phlegen sol  
und waz si zuht, ēre unde guot  
und wā vor man sol sin behuot  
und waz si reht ode unreht  
und waz si krump ode sleht  
und waz si valsche ode wār,  
daz solt man siu lēren gar.  
dar zuo solde ein herre wert  
haben die meister wol gelērt  
in sinem hove, daz sīniu kint  
und ouch die andern die dā sint  
sich möhten vürdern an der lēre:

*Wälsche Gast* 9239 ff.

F. X. Thalhoffer says about courtly education: "Hier an den Höfen, wo sich die edelsten Ritter und die ritterlichen Dichter versammelten, fanden die Jungherrn lebende Muster der höflichkeit und der mäßigkeit. Sie hatten Pagendienste bei der Tafel, Hilfsdienste beim Turnier und gelegentlich wohl auch Botendienste zu verrichten. An ihr Benehmen, namentlich nach der Seite des ehrerbietigen Betragens, wurden hohe Anforderungen gestellt. Auch die Elemente der literarischen Bildung wurden vom Zuchtmeister oder vom Hofkaplan vermittelt. Besonders an geistlichen Höfen wurde darauf gesehen." *Unterricht und Bildung im Mittelalter* (München, 1928), 93.

<sup>94</sup>

Elliu ēre gar zergāt,  
der niht zuht noch meister hāt.

*Bescheidenheit* 53, 23 f.;

cf. also 139, 14 a-b.

The contempt for learning which prevailed among the upper classes even as late as the thirteenth century<sup>95</sup> evokes much criticism from the didactic writers. The author of the *Winsbecke* alone seems to be satisfied with the state of affairs. There is no indication whatsoever that he desires his son to devote himself to learning. Worldly wisdom, i. e., learning without God, he says, is foolishness in the sight of God.<sup>96</sup> Freidank asserts that wisdom is often found among the lowly, while the great have no leisure to acquire it (80, 27 ff.). Thomasin complains that laymen are ignorant of the seven liberal arts (9181 ff.). Learning has become rare among the laity,<sup>97</sup> whereas noble youth was formerly learned and the world was much better on that account.<sup>98</sup> Princes should, therefore, pursue learning and become wise as were Alexander, Ptolemy, Neptanêbus,<sup>99</sup> Solomon, David, the three Magi, and Julius Caesar (9209 ff.). They should honor men of learning and surround themselves with them (6418 f.). Thomasin must have known instances where noble children were unable to read, since he states explicitly that ability to read was a general accomplishment of better times, now past (9197 f.). He constantly keeps in mind that the higher paths of learning are unfamiliar to one group of his readers, the noble laity, and he makes allowance for this deficiency.<sup>100</sup>

Hugo of Trimberg says that formerly kings were chosen not for

<sup>95</sup> F. X. Thalhöfer believes that, due to the influence of the crusades and the concomitant rise of chivalry, the contempt for learning somewhat diminished during the rule of the Hohenstaufen. *Cf. op. cit.*, 88 f.

<sup>96</sup> ez sprach hie vor ein wiser man,  
daz dirre werlte wisheit si  
vor gote ein tôrheit sunder wân:

*Winsbecke*, 5, 5 ff.

<sup>97</sup> jâ sint nu stunt vîr die tac  
daz die leien wârn gelêrt:  
diu lernunge ist nu wordn unwert.

*Wälsche Gast* 9194 ff.

<sup>98</sup> dô wâren gar diu edeln kint  
gelêrt, des si nu niht ensint.  
dô stuont ouch diu werlt baz

*Ibid.*, 9199 ff.

<sup>99</sup> It is doubtful to what ancient name Thomasin here refers.

<sup>100</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 6037 ff.; 9181 ff.; 9299; 9663.

their nobility nor riches, but for their learning,<sup>101</sup> and cites as examples the three kings from the East (1253). Men in responsible positions should also be fitted for their post (4180 ff.). Learning brings many a poor man to the court and to high honors.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, Hugo says, the youth of today are little desirous of learning the things which will be of advantage. Instead of using their time profitably, the young indulge in vicious habits and bring disgrace and sorrow to their friends (17494 ff.). What grieves Hugo most is the want of respect and gratitude towards their teachers evinced by those who received the benefits of learning. Popes and emperors, kings and dukes, bishops, abbots, and the entire clergy are educated in schools (17553 ff.), yet they seem to forget that

. . . maniger würde vil lützel geërt,  
Hëten in die meister niht gelërt. (17551 f.)

The attitude of the didactic writers toward learning in general indicates their belief that acquaintance with the rudiments of learning was desirable, if not necessary, for a nobleman. Times had changed. War, though still the main business of the noble knight, was no longer his only concern, nor was attendance on great nobles his sole occupation in times of peace. He was challenged to help solve the complicated problems of higher public affairs and, for that, something beyond the training of the soldier and courtier was needed. If men of nobility neglected to do their part and continued in their scorn for learning, the management of governmental affairs would pass into the hands of men of lowly origin. This anxiety is especially noticeable in Thomasin, and seems to be the keynote of his moral treatise.

The chief textbooks by which knightly culture was transmitted to

<sup>101</sup> Wilent ein guot gewonheit was,  
Als ich vür wâr geschriben las,  
Daz nieman wart ze künige erkorn,  
Swie rich er was, swie hêchgeborn,  
Er kônde der siben frien künste  
Sô vil, daz in mit frier gûnste  
Die fûrsten ûz andern herren schelten  
Und in durch sîne kunst erwelten. *Renner* 1245 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Si bringet den an der fûrsten rât,  
der friunde und guotes lûtzel hât; *Ibid.*, 17687 f.;

also 17702 ff.

noble society were courtly epics and romances. They were guide-books for chivalrous conduct extolling the heroic deeds of knightly adventurers.<sup>103</sup> The attitude of the didactic writers regarding these tales is noteworthy. The author of the *Winsbecke* is steeped in their lore and desires his son to follow in the footprints of the valorous knights. He reminds him of Gahmurete, the gallant warrior, who through his bravery won the heart of Belakane (18, 5 ff.), and exhorts him to equal courage. Freidank is silent on this subject, while Thomasin is somewhat undecided as to the educational value of romances of chivalry. Children, he says, should read good books and avoid bad ones (762 ff.; 773 ff.). He reprimands the young woman who read the account of Helen of Troy, but he concedes that a young lady who reads it may be profitably warned by it.<sup>104</sup>

daz mant si daz si sich behuote. (787)

His models of exemplary conduct are taken from chivalric romances (1041 ff.). He is fully aware, however, that these tales are of service only to children (1080), and laymen (1104) who are unable to understand scholarly exposition. These can derive some profit from them (1112), and the poets who translated the courtly epics into German are deserving of gratitude (1135 ff.), because

guot âventiure zuht mêrt. (1138)

Nevertheless, he is forced to add that more honor would accrue to them if they had written the truth.<sup>105</sup> For those able to grasp serious thoughts it is a waste of time to read what has been adul-

<sup>103</sup> "Der Held des Epos wird als Vorbild gepriesen, seine Tugend zur Nachahmung empfohlen, oder es wird ein warnendes Beispiel aufgestellt." H. Brinkmann, "Zu Wesen und Form mittelalterlicher Dichtung," *GRM.* 15 (1927), 195. — With regard to their educational influence cf. J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 142 ff.

<sup>104</sup>  
 diu tet unreht diuz êrste las,  
 wan boese bilde verkêrent sêre  
 guote zuht und guote lêre.     *Wälsche Gast* 776 ff.  
<sup>105</sup>  
 und heten si getihtet daz  
 daz vil gar ân lûge waere;  
 des heten si noch groezer êre.     *Ibid.*, 1140 ff. —

Cf. H. Brinkmann, "Zu Wesen und Form mittelalterlicher Dichtung," *loc. cit.*, 201 and note 1.

terated with falsehood (1113 ff.). Thus Thomasin tolerates this type of poetry, looking upon it as a kind of sugared dose of morality.

Hugo of Trimberg sees nothing good in romances of chivalry. He regrets that they are widely known and unduly praised (1222 ff.). Those who write them are guilty of sin.<sup>106</sup> They are fabrications of lies;<sup>107</sup> they debase morals and corrupt manners, because foolish youth will try to imitate the adventurous life of these heroes (21654 ff.).

The most singular practice connected with medieval knighthood was courtly love.<sup>108</sup> Woman became the center of admiration, the arbiter of all that is good and noble. Her praises were sung by the troubadour, the minstrel of knighthood. This cult is supposed to have originated in Provence,<sup>109</sup> and from Provence it spread to the rest of Europe.

<sup>106</sup> Mit sünden er sîn houbet toubt  
Swer tihtet, des man niht geloubt. *Renner* 1229 f.

<sup>107</sup> Parcifâl und Tristrant,  
Wigolais und Enêas,  
Èrec, Iwân und swer ouch was  
Ze der tafelrunne in Karidôl.  
*Doch sint diu buoch gar lügen vol, Ibid., 21640 ff.*

<sup>108</sup> Much has been written concerning the origin and nature of courtly love in German literature. Some of the most important treatments are: J. Schwietering, "Einwirkung der Antike auf die Entstehung des frühen deutschen Minnesangs," *ZfdA.* 61 (1924), 61-82; K. Korn, *Studien über "Freude und Trären" bei mittelhochdeutschen Dichtern* (Leipzig, 1932), ch. 4; H. Langenbucher, *Das Gesicht des deutschen Minnesangs und seine Wandlungen* (Heidelberg, 1930); Fr. Neumann, "Walther von der Vogelweide und das Reich," *DVjschrLW.* 1 (1923), 504 ff.; H. Brinkmann, "Zur geistesgeschichtlichen Stellung des deutschen Minnesangs," *DVjschrLW.* 3 (1925), 615-641; G. Ehrismann, "Die Kürenberg-Literatur und die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesangs," *GRM.* 15 (1927), 328-350, with further bibliographical references. See also H. G. Atkins, "The Chivalry of Germany," *Chivalry*, ed. by E. Prestage (New York, 1928), 97 ff., and Alice A. Hentsch, *De la littérature didactique du moyen âge* (Halle, 1903), 50 f. and 53 f.

<sup>109</sup> "Dort zuerst hatte sich, teils aus fleischlichem Wohlgefallen und Schönheitssinn, teils aus Grossmut und Hoherzigkeit, die männliche Kraft des schwächeren Geschlechtes angenommen." K. Vossler, *Die göttliche Komödie* I, 2, p. 487. Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of the Arthurian court and Ovidian characters (Narcissus, Medea, Helen, Paris) also gradually contributed to it. Cf. Cross and Nitze, *Lancelot and Guenevere* (Chicago, 1930), 97 f.

Thomasin seems to be rather well acquainted with this social convention—at least with its literary angle. Disquisitions on the art of loving were probably known to him.<sup>110</sup> He himself wrote two poems in the Provençal tongue<sup>111</sup> before he composed his *Wälsche Gast*. They were instructions in the art of love, such as were then in vogue. One was a *Minnelehre* for the knight, the other was written *einer vrowen ze ère*.<sup>112</sup> Both are lost, but the author gives a brief summary of their contents in the first book of his *Wälsche Gast*. He says:

ich seit daz man der minne kraft  
mit schoenem sinne tragen sol,  
swer âne schant wil leben wol. (1176 ff.)

Then he proceeds to explain the essence of *minne* (1179-1200), and cautions against the wrong means to obtain it, namely: force (1201-1212), magic (1213-1220), extravagant presents (1221-1258), ex-

<sup>110</sup> Teske says: "an einem oberitalienischen Hof und in provenzalischer Konversation hat Thomasin die Minnedichtung und Minneterminologie gelernt." *Op. cit.*, 87.

<sup>111</sup> Both were composed shortly after 1200. *Cf.* H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 95. Teske also settles the controversy concerning the number and nature of the poems. *Cf. ibid.*, 79-95. He argues convincingly that the language which Thomasin used for his two lost poems must have been the Provençal. *Cf. op. cit.*, 58-79. E. Wechssler also suggests Provençal origin. *Cf. Das Kulturproblem des Minnesangs* I (Halle, 1909), 33 and 138. — The Italian vernacular was not a literary language at Thomasin's time. *Cf.* K. Vossler, *Die göttliche Komödie* II, 1, p. 583 f.; H. D. Sedgwick, *Italy in the thirteenth century* (Boston and New York, 1933), I, 141 f.; A. Gaspary, *Geschichte der italienischen Literatur* (Strassburg, 1885-88), I, 50; E. Wechssler, *op. cit.*, 33, n. 1. — It was, however, spoken by the people, and Thomasin must have been more familiar with it than with the German, since he refers to his Italian descent as a sufficient excuse for any mistakes he may happen to make (67 ff. and 1468 ff.); *cf.* also H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 49. — Thus we may safely assert that Thomasin was conversant with four languages at least; his own mother tongue, *i. e.*, the speech of the Italian merchant; German from his association with German nobility; Provençal from his sojourn at an Upper Italian court; and Latin as a student of a cathedral school. H. Rückert in his edition of the *Wälsche Gast*, *Anmerkungen*, 531, believes that Thomasin wrote in Northern French and so does Laura Toretta in "Ancora del Wälscher Gast," *Studi Medievali* 1 (1904/05), 622. — A. E. Schönbach in *Die Anfänge des deutschen Minnesanges* (Graz, 1898), 62 and 76, speaks of an Italian book *della cortesia*.

<sup>112</sup> *Wälsche Gast* 1555. — *Cf.* H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 81.



tortion (1330-1337), and enumerates such gifts as were proper for a lady to receive:

hantschuoch, spiegel, vingerlîn,  
vûrspangel, schapel, blûemelîn. (1340 f.)

He also gives advice for modest, faithful, and continuous service (1392-1432), but counsels kindly separation if there is no hope of gaining a hearing (1535-1548). Addressing the lady, Thomasin tells her to be wary in her choice of a lover (1565-1570), not to be deceived by the wealth of a worthless man (1571-88), not to love one below her rank (1589-92); but, if she does, to choose a man who is *biderbe unde guot* (1595), that is, one who by his nobility of character lifts himself above his lowborn station (1593-1606).<sup>113</sup>

There can be no doubt that *minne*, as it is presented by Thomasin, owes its distinctive mark to the influence of the troubadours.<sup>114</sup> It is courtly love, *l'amour courtois*, of which he speaks.<sup>115</sup> But when Thomasin came to the court of Wolfger, his duties as well as his surroundings changed his outlook on life. There he lived amidst German knights, where French troubadours had no voice. Courtly love lost its glamor and Thomasin began to look at it from a moralist's point of view. This changed attitude is already discernible in the first book, when he interrupts his discourse on courtly love to speak of marriage (1304 ff.; 1354 ff.; 1370 ff.). It is still more pronounced in the rest of the work.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 82. Karl Vossler asserts that the changing conception of nobility was most clearly manifested in the ethical code of courtly love. Cf. *Die göttliche Komödie* I, 2, p. 488.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 87-95.

<sup>115</sup> "Das ist ein festes System, dessen höchstes Ziel nicht wie in den deutschen Minnelehren *gotes hulde* oder irgendein Wert ausserhalb oder über der Wohlerzogenheit ist, sondern *diu minne*, nur sie." *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>116</sup> He says in one place:

sol aver der vrf wesen,  
der ân ein wîp niht kan genesen  
und der niht hât sô vil kraft,  
ern müeze ir meisterschaft  
dulden und gar ir gebot?  
der machet ûz im selben spot,  
der alle wege ligen muoz  
under eines wîbes vuoz. (4301-4308).

Cf. also 4012 ff.; 4029 f.; 4083 ff.; 4125 ff.; 7205 ff.; 8021 ff.

*Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* are related in thought content to Thomasin's instructions in the art of love. The author of the *Winsbeckin* in particular devotes much space to the subject of *minne*. The mother prepares her daughter for marriage and it is in this connection that she speaks of it. She warns against love as a passion, but sings the praise of *hōhe minne*.<sup>117</sup> This spiritualized love lifts man above himself through the ideal which he pursues.

swen hōhiu minne twingen gert,  
der sol unvuoge lāzen gar  
und mache sich den werden wert.                     (25, 8 ff.)

A virtuous heart alone is capable of such love.

ez muoz gereinet innen sīn,  
ê daz si ūzen klophe dran:                     (39, 8 f.)

If it has taken possession of a man, it makes him despise everything that is low and fills him with a desire to become worthy of his ideal.

sint si an hōhen tugenden wert  
die si mit zūhten vindet vrō,  
die ziuhet si mit ir sō hō,  
daz si versmaehent swachen muot.                     (37, 3 ff.)

The author of the *Winsbeckin* warns, like Thomasin, against loving a person of lower rank.<sup>118</sup> The writer of the *Winsbecke* considers it a great blessing that womanhood has come to be honored again.<sup>119</sup> He is eloquent in his eulogy of women (12, 1 ff.). If there be

<sup>117</sup> Fr. Neumann thus characterizes *hōhe minne*: "In der Hohen Minne . . . wird die Geliebte nicht so gesehen, wie sie ist, sondern zum Ideal gesteigert, das emporzieht. Man liebt nicht die individuelle Person, man liebt vielmehr ein Wunschbild des Menschen. Man bildet sich, in dem man sehnsüchtig aufblickt zur vollkommensten Gestalt."—"Hohe Minne," *ZfDeutschk.* 39 (1925), 85. Cf. also K. Boestfleisch, *Studien zum Minnegedanken bei Wolfram von Eschenbach* (Königsberg, 1930), 80 and 98 ff.; Hans Naumann says: "Liebenden wie Geliebten beseelt allein die Sorge um die eigene innere Tüchtigkeit, die Förderung der edlen Gesinnung, der Eifer immer weiser, besser, edler zu werden. Wer von solcher Sorge nichts weiss, der dient dem irdischen Eros." *Höfische Kultur* (Halle, 1929), 31.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *Winsbeckin* 36, 9 ff.: *Wälsche Gast* 1589 f.

<sup>119</sup>                     ez was ein tugentlicher vunt,  
dō guoter wibe wart gedāht.                     *Winsbecke* 15, 5 f.

one, he says, who falls short of the ideal, she is an exception—merely one in a thousand (10, 8 f.).<sup>120</sup> Courtly love in the *Winsbecke* is quite incidental (91, 1 ff.); the general emphasis is upon conjugal love.

This is also the case with Freidank. He says:

Ich sihe nâch frömder minne varn  
der sîn wîp niht kan bewarn. (99, 21 f.)<sup>121</sup>

But his attitude toward *hôhe minne* is the same as that of the author of the *Winsbeckin*. *Hôhe minne* exerts a beneficent influence in that it deepens a man's moral worth. He says:

Ein wîp wirt in ir herzen wert,  
swenn ir der besten einer gert. (100, 16 f.)

and:

Ein man wirt werder dan er sl,  
gelt er hôher minne bf. (100, 18 f.)

Hugo of Trimberg, who follows Freidank in so many respects, does not adopt this sentiment. He seems to be wholly unacquainted with this convention. *minne* is to him love in general, which must be watched lest it degenerate. It is permissible in wedlock only.<sup>122</sup>

Hugo, eminently practical, has no sympathy whatsoever with chivalrous pastimes. He ridicules stone-throwing (11651 ff.), and inveighs against wrestling and jumping (11678 ff.). How much more profitable would it be, he says, if useful works were undertaken instead, such as clearing roads and building bridges, etc.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Cf. also *Freidank* 101, 15 f. and 103, 1 f.

<sup>121</sup> The parallels between Thomasin and Freidank in the subject of courtly love are noted by H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 87 and footnotes 479 and 480.

<sup>122</sup> Wizzet er ist ein sêlic man,  
Swer mit zûhten minnen kan  
Daz er ze rehte minnen sol:  
Unzimlich minne stêt niht wol: *Renner* 11923 ff.

<sup>123</sup> Ein nûtzer were wôlt ich im zeigen:  
Daz er wûrfe an hôhen steigen  
Grôz und kleine steine ûz dem wege  
Und daz er brücken unde stege  
Mehte swâ sîn wûrde nôt:  
Des genüzze sîn sêle, swenne er wêr tôt.

*Renner* 11669 ff.

He is most severe in his criticisms of the tournament. He mentions three kinds according to their purpose: the tournament for spoils, where horse, armor, or a considerable amount of money is the prize of the victorious contestant (11647); the tournament *durch liebes wibes minne* (11649), i. e., for the love of a fair lady; and the tournament for honor's sake, for *tummes ruomes wân* (11640). He disapproves of the *buhurt* where dull weapons are used,<sup>124</sup> as well as of the *tjoste* (joust), a more dangerous form of single combat (11648).<sup>125</sup> Many a one, he says, loses body, soul, and property through such vainglorious competition (11589 ff.).<sup>126</sup> Hugo is in perfect accord with the Church, which refused to extend her sanction to tournaments, tilts, and armed combats, and particularly to judicial duels.<sup>127</sup> The danger to life, as well as their excessive cost, no doubt accounts for her objection.

Freidank ridicules the idea of risking one's life for the sake of earthly glory. Many a one rushes to an early grave as if he feared to miss his chance. There is no need for such haste. He will get there just as well without any effort on his part.<sup>128</sup>

Neither the author of the *Winsbecke* nor Thomasin are greatly concerned about the physical dangers connected with the tournament. For the former it is the test of real knighthood. With the enthusiasm of one long-practiced in the art, he describes the procedure at a chivalrous single combat, where two knights ride out, their spears lowered with the purpose of unseating each other either by a thrust at the helmet or at the shield. This was the usual way of fighting (21, 1-9).<sup>129</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Cf. J. Dieffenbacher, *op. cit.*, II, 133.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 134.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. also 6561 f.; 1079 ff.; 13507.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. J. Petersen, *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe*, 165; *Cambridge Medieval Hist.* VI, 814.

<sup>128</sup>

Vil maneger flet hin ze grabe als ob er sich versümet habe; daz fien daz ist âne nôt, er kûre wol müezecliche den tôt.	(177, 25 ff.).
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Cf. also Renner 11611 ff.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. J. Dieffenbacher, *op. cit.*, II, 134.

Thomasin's opposition is levelled rather at the pride and vain-glory displayed in these encounters. He says:

der dunket mich ouch niht ze wls,  
der dā waent bejagen pris  
dā aller slahte ende hāt. (3801 ff.)

He ridicules the knight who, for the sake of *ruom*, i. e., glory, takes part in a tournament. Many a one, he says, has great dreams in which he figures as the bold knight who lifts all his opponents from the saddle. No one will equal him in prowess, his praise will be on every one's lips, and many will be the comments on his costly accoutrement (3835 ff.).<sup>130</sup> Thomasin also suggests a certain coarseness in the knightly practice of the tournament, which had crept in and which he considers unworthy of a refined gentleman.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless he loves to attend tournaments. It is the *buhurt*, however, of which he speaks, where dull weapons were used, and the combatant's life was not in danger. Thus his general attitude is rather lenient despite the fact that he is a clergyman.

Coats of arms were a colorful characteristic of chivalry. The writers emphasize in particular their symbolical meaning. Thomasin seems to be best acquainted with heraldry. Petersen<sup>132</sup> says that he speaks as a layman without understanding, because he admonishes to *māze* in the use of heraldic designs. This may be true, but his intimate acquaintance with nobility argues otherwise. It must not be forgotten that though he was a moralist, a preacher, he was far from being an ascetic. Heraldry had for him a moral significance; it was a symbol of virtue. Thomasin criticizes the emperor's coat of arms as being overdone. Otto carries in his shield three lions and half an eagle (10480).<sup>133</sup> One lion, Thomasin says, signifies

<sup>130</sup> Cf. also Renner 11615 ff.

<sup>131</sup> He says:

swelch kint schimpht, der schimphe alsō  
daz man dervon nien werde unvrō.  
boes ernst kumt von boesem schimphe:  
man sol schimphen daz ez glimphe.

*Wälsche Gast* 659 ff.

<sup>132</sup> *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe*, 95, n. 3.

<sup>133</sup> According to Ed. Winkelmann, *Philipp von Schwaben und Otto IV von Braunschweig* II (Leipzig, 1873), 498 f., the eagle represented Otto's Roman kingship, while the three lions were the family ensign of the Hohenstaufen.

*hohen muot* (10495), but three are indicative of *übermuot* (10496 and 12355). An entire eagle is the symbol of *êre* (10502 and 12360), but half an eagle indicates *der êre schidunge* (10504 and 12358). Three lions are too much but half an eagle is too little. That is *unmâze* (10492), and the root of all evil in the world. Thomasin refers repeatedly to the heraldic figures of the eagle and the lion.<sup>134</sup>

Hugo also mentions the *adelar*, i. e., the eagle as a symbol of moral worth,<sup>135</sup> and says that he who has chosen the lion, should be *tugenthaft und milte* (19308). The falcon was looked upon as the special symbol of knighthood.<sup>136</sup> Thomasin comments on the existence of spurious heraldic designs; the practice of appropriating another's coat of arms was not infrequent.<sup>137</sup>

Outwardly, the nobleman was distinguished from the lower classes of society by his military equipment, his dress and retinue, as well as by the appellation, *Herr*. Freidank compares the outfit of the knight with that of the squire (*kneht*), saying:

Ros schilt sper hûbe unde swert  
diu machent guoten ritter wert.  
  
Hengest kocher unde bogen  
die hânt manegen kneht betrogen     (93, 6 ff.)<sup>138</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Cf. 12361 ff.; 12429 ff.; 12483 ff.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Renner 17466; 19241 f.; 23921 f. Concerning the influence of pagan writers upon symbolical interpretation see L. K. Born, "Ovid and Allegory," *Speculum* 9 (1934), 366 ff.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Renner 21608 and Freidank 73, 17; 143, 13.

<sup>137</sup> He says:

saehe ich verre in dem lande  
ein gewaefn daz ich erkande,  
ich wände unde sprache sâ  
daz der rîter waere dâ  
ze dem ich diu wâfen hiet gesehen,  
und möht sîn doch anders geschehen:  
wan der man der si hiete dâ,  
der möht si haben anderswâ  
verstoln ode sus genomen;  
ez ist ouch dicke alsô komen.

*Wälsche Gast* 13967 ff.

Cf. also Renner 1079 ff. and J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 96, n. 3.

<sup>138</sup> There can be no doubt that the didactic writers used *kneht* in the

Hugo of Trimberg includes the *schützen*, i. e., the cross-bow, and the *kolben* or club in his enumeration of knightly equipment,<sup>139</sup> forgetting evidently that these were unknighly weapons.<sup>140</sup>

The knight and his horse were inseparable. From the time of Charles Martel the warrior class regularly fought on horseback.<sup>141</sup> The knight's horse was of huge size, in distinction to palfreys, coursers, and nags. It had to carry a rider clad in full armor, and was the knight's companion in tournament and war.<sup>142</sup> Hugo of Trimberg refers twice to *høhe pferde* (2486, 13624). Skillful management of the horse was held in high repute.<sup>143</sup>

The shield was the most important of the insignia of knighthood, so much so that the author of the *Winsbecke* identifies it with knighthood itself.<sup>144</sup> The sword was scarcely less important. The farmer was forbidden to carry it,<sup>145</sup> and Hugo has nothing but scorn for those who without right assume this privilege (1578).<sup>146</sup>

Hugo insists that costly garments do not make the nobleman. Many an adventurer can display them, because honorable positions are given to the rich instead of to the worthy (18941 ff.). Precious rugs, he says, are fit indeed for princely courts (17389), and beautiful portraits do well adorn castle walls (17391); but such luxury ill becomes the humble man nor does it grace the clergy.<sup>147</sup> Life was much simpler in the beginning. Adam had no desire for

Prisschuoe, hüben, gebildet hemde (22755),

sense of servant, attendant, or squire. It had lost much of its original connotation by their time.

<sup>139</sup>

Harnasch, schützen, schoeniu pfert,

Helm, schilt, kolben unde swert Renner 2399 f.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. J. Dieffenbacher, *op. cit.*, II, 96 f.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. H. Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte* II, 276 ff.; H. O. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind*, 4th ed. (London, 1930), I, 541 f.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. R. Berenger, *The history and art of horsemanship* (London, 1771), I, 169, 170; Ch. Seignobos, *The Feudal Régime* (New York, 1902), 29.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Winsbecke* 21, 4; *Wälsche Gast* 3851; *Renner* 13905 ff.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *Winsbecke* 17, 1 ff.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 117.

<sup>146</sup> Thomasin considers the symbolical meaning of the knightly equipment. Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 7470 ff.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. *Renner* 2489 ff.; 16500 ff.; 1578 ff.; 1773 ff.

nor did he long for golden and silver table-service (22758) or perfumes (22760 f.). Often the poor have to pay for the luxury of their betters.<sup>148</sup>

The profession of the knight required the attendance of a servant or *kneht*. He had to assist his lord in putting on or taking off the heavy armor, and in performing other kinds of menial service.<sup>149</sup> Even poor noblemen, like Walther von der Vogelweide, who did not take part in warlike exploits, had to keep an attendant.<sup>150</sup> The greater the lord, the larger and more distinguished was his retinue. Hugo thinks it fit that powerful princes, *hōhe fürsten*, should surround themselves with a large train of followers (17396), but takes exception to the practice of making the poor pay for this expensive luxury (2199 ff.).

Often sons of nobles, who had not yet been dubbed knights, served in the capacity of attendants at foreign courts.<sup>151</sup> No direct mention is made of these in the didactic poems. The *schiltknehte*, however, who were of ignoble origin, are frequently referred to. Hugo pities their evil lot. He says:

Diz ist ein orden an allen frumen: (7432)

One who belongs to this class certainly knows misery (7435). Dishonorable work and wretched living are his portion (7399 ff.). Frëidank remarks in his terse way that services should be reciprocal.<sup>152</sup> He also says that a servant who has a good lord sins against God if he does not obey his lord's commands.<sup>153</sup> Thomasin admonishes the knight to treat his servant well and to honor God in him (7867). It may happen, he says, that the *eigenkneht* will have

<sup>148</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 2343 f.; 2207 ff., and especially 18955 ff.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 121-124.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. K. Burdach, *Walther von der Vogelweide I* (Leipzig, 1900), 11; V. Vedel, *Ritterromantik* (Leipzig, 1911), 5; Ch. Seignobos, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. E. F. Jacob, "The Beginnings of Medieval Chivalry," *Chivalry* (New York, 1928), ed. by E. Prestage, 40 f.

<sup>152</sup> Swâ man dienst für dienst hât,  
dâ sol man dienen; deist mîn rât.

*Bescheidenheit* 50, 8 f.

<sup>153</sup> Swelch hêrre guoten willen hât  
und sînen kneht den wizzen lât,  
tuot er dan niht sîn gebot,  
der kneht sündet wider got.

*Ibid.*, 49, 11 ff.



greater honor in the next world than he whom he served on earth (7871 ff.). Besides, he adds, a servant's soul and thoughts are free (7875 ff.) even though he lives in subjection. The lord's responsibility toward his servants is great (7904 ff.; 7916; 7945 f.), and God will hold him accountable if they do wrong (7964 ff.).

The social distinction between the nobleman and the man of low birth was also brought out by the title of *Herr*.<sup>154</sup> Anyone possessing a noble or clerical office had a right to this appellation. It was also used as a mark of courtesy toward persons of the middle class. Thus the farmers in Hugo of Trimberg's *Renner* honor Hugo with that title. Hugo makes direct reference to it as an honorable distinction coveted by many (17880). He also draws a parallel between *herre* and *êre*, saying that they are equal in many respects (895) and that one presupposes the other.<sup>155</sup> *Êre* is to be understood here in the sense of moral worth, and the title, *Herr*, therefore, acquires a moral significance.

The nobility portrayed by the didactic writers was the feudal aristocracy of the thirteenth century. There is a certain vagueness as to class distinctions. The borderline between the various ranks of nobles and between nobility and commonalty is not clearly defined. The original nobility of birth has become corrupted through infiltration from below, and the didactic poets protest against it. No serious objection is voiced against the existence of this new class, nor against the rights and privileges they claim. The writers, however, take exception to the faults and shortcomings of this nobility and castigate them in various ways. Kings and princes rob the poor to enjoy themselves and to amuse the flatterers about them; they pay no homage to God nor to the Church. They

<sup>154</sup> Ehrismann says: "Der Titel 'Herr' kam ursprünglich nur dem Freien (dem Adel) zu, aber durch Erteilung der Ritterwürde wurde er auch auf die unfreien Dienstmännern übertragen." *LG*, II, 1, p. 16. Cf. also p. 299, n. 5 and J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 131 ff.

<sup>155</sup>

Herre ân êre ist lesterlîche;  
Êre bi herren, herre mit êren  
Kan gunst, guot und nuz gemêren;  
Herre ânê êre ist ermer vil  
Denne arm mit êren,

*Renner* 896 ff.

should preserve justice, and instead they spend their time in foolish pleasures. While the poor go hungry, their lords eat and drink what they have stolen from them. They oppress them in every way. The knights, whose duty is the protection of the defenceless, think of nothing but hunting, tourneying, dancing, and feasting. Honorable vassals have disappeared and flatterers have taken their place at courts. Their sole concern is adding to their wealth. All are covetous and mercenary, even the clergy. The bishops have become niggardly. They love war and luxury too much and disregard the burdens of the poor. Temporal duties at royal courts usurp the place of the spiritual duties of the clergy. All this was different in times gone by, when the nobles were of good stock, magnanimous and just, their courts respectable and renowned, their councilors wise and learned.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AND MORAL NOBILITY ACCORDING TO THE DIDACTIC WRITERS

The thirteenth century is replete with the problems of a new social era. The impact of waning feudalism with a rising industrial society, which in later centuries becomes so forceful, is already fore-shadowed in the writings of the didactic poets. From them we may gather that the towns began to constitute a disturbing element, and that the new classes, merchant, professional, and artisan, which they produced, were soon to be reckoned with. The *Winsbecke* reflects a society still unruffled by changing social and economic conditions. But Thomasin, Freidank, and Hugo are aware of certain undercurrents which are gradually but surely undermining the existing social structure.

A trend toward commercialism characterizes the upper classes, the nobility as well as the higher clergy. Their one aim seems to be the acquisition of wealth. The whole world, Freidank says, is desirous of gain (55, 19 f.). Profit is preferred to a man's dearest possessions, his wife and children (56, 1 f.). His thirst for more is insatiable (41, 18 ff.; 56, 3 f.).

Des mannes sin  
ist sin gewin.

(56, 5 f.) <sup>1</sup>

Even youth is taught how best to gain riches and worldly profits. The avaricious man, Hugo says, scorns training in liberality and honor, and would substitute for true culture a practical education in the art of money-making. He would teach his children and his grandchildren that trick of finance by which a penny grows to a pound.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 41, 18 ff.; 56, 3 f. There are numerous variations of the same theme in the sources. Cf. also *Renner* 773; 16330 ff.; 5097 f.; 4405 f.; *Wälsche Gast* 13751 ff.

Ich wil lëren mñiu kint  
Und mñ tiehter ein bezzer dinc:  
Wie von einem orte ein helbelinc,  
Wie von dem helbeling ein pfenninc,

Learning and law are now pursued for the sake of gain. Noblemen, Thomasin says, are eager to be instructed in the art of reading and writing, not for the sake of culture but in order to secure through fraud and trickery what cannot be gotten through physical prowess.<sup>4</sup> The very terms of law are made subservient to this passion for gain. The lords, observes Thomasin, *lantrehten nâch gewinne* (8707). They strain its meaning, and seek in it an excuse to circumvent the neighbor in his rights (8716 ff.). Their judgments are swayed by greed. Hugo puts it graphically when he says:

Si ziehent daz reht üm bi der nasen:     (8407) <sup>4</sup>

But the evil does not stop here. Noblemen, says Thomasin, have so far forgotten their name and rank as to engage in trade. Instead of fostering *tugende unde reht*, they dishonor their calling by sitting far into the night over their account books.<sup>5</sup>

Wie von dem pfenning ein schillinc,  
Wie von dem schilling wahse ein pfunt:  
Und daz in daz baz werde kunt,  
Sô sûln sie sliefen von dem wege  
Und weder milte noch êren pflege,  
Loben und schelten gelliche wegen,  
Fluochen haben vûr einen segen.     Renner 4526 ff.

Cf. also 16684 f., and *Wälsche Gast* 9276 f.

\*     der leie dunkt sich ouch niht wert,  
ern habe zuo sinem swert  
diu buoch, wan der schrift sin  
wil er ouch haben an gewin.  
er heizet im schriben harte wol  
daz wuocher daz man im geben sol.  
swa im gebristet siner sterke,  
dâ kêrt er ane list und kerge.     (8687 ff.).

Cf. also Renner 13338 f.; 17855 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also Renner 8295 f; 8479 f.

\*     Nu seht wie daz eim rîter guot  
stêt, daz er dar an sinen muot  
kêrt, daz er wetzet sinen sin  
nahtes wachende ûf gewin,  
der niwan an rîterschaft  
solde vrumen sine kraft  
und an tugende und an reht:

Usury and trade are synonymous with the didactic writers. The merchant is the *wuocheraere*,<sup>8</sup> and he is scorned, principally on account of the deception and fraud ever associated with his occupation. Freidank says:

mich dunket niht daz ieman mûge  
vil verkoufen âne lûge. (171, 13 f.)<sup>7</sup>

He ascribes the creation of the merchant class to satan, the father of lies (27, 3), and states that it has acquired mastery over

gebûre ritter unde pfaffen: (27, 2)<sup>8</sup>

The writers believe themselves in accord with the teachings of the Church and the decrees of synods, which condemn usury.<sup>9</sup>

Although in theory nobility and trade were mutually exclusive, noblemen did not hesitate to marry the rich daughters of those they despised.<sup>10</sup> Freidank deplores this practice. Through it, he says, marriage becomes a mercenary affair and many a noble family goes to ruin.<sup>11</sup>

er waer noch verre baz kneht,  
swelich rîter alsô tuot,  
daz er ist rîter durch daz guot.

*Wälsche Gast* 8695 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Thomasin uses the word more in the sense of money-lender; but he also speaks rather disparagingly of the merchant or "koufman." Cf. 14331 f.; 14504.

<sup>7</sup> Freidank speaks against *wuocher* from 27, 1-28, 15. Cf. also 48, 2; 166, 1 f., and Renner 6199; 8300 ff.; 4866 ff.; 4687 f.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Renner 5177 ff. See also M. R. Kaufmann, "Der Kaufmannsstand in der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts," *Die Grenzboten* 69 (1910), Viertes Vierteljahr, 111; R. Limmer, *op. cit.*, 46.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. C. J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte* V, 899 and 844; H. Teske, *Thomasin von Zerclaere*, 111 and n. 598. F. Neumann, "Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* (1922), 400 f. and footnotes.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. W. Sombart, *Luxus und Kapitalismus* (München u. Leipzig, 1913), 18.

<sup>11</sup>

swer wibes gert der wil ze hant  
liute schatz bûrge unt lant.  
swelch ê durch gîftekeit geschiht,  
diu machet rehter erben niht.  
manc grôziu hêrschaft nû zergât,  
daz si niht rehter erben hât. *Freidank* 75, 12 ff.

Cf. also Renner 13038 ff., and Ch. Seignobos, *The Feudal Régime*, 32.

Constant warfare and other evils of feudalism had reduced many nobles to sore straits.<sup>12</sup> To retrieve their fortunes, they preyed upon their subjects and even resorted to thieving and robbing. It was thus that the robber-baron and robber-knight came into existence. Hugo of Trimberg says that poor nobles are treated with disdain (6731 ff.). Unable to bear this, they become robbers and thieves. They mask themselves, change their voice to avoid being recognized, and fall upon the unsuspecting traveler (6740 ff.).<sup>13</sup> Thomasin also knows of those who ride about at night watching for prey (243 f.), and he warns his knights against robbery and theft (7253 ff.).<sup>14</sup>

While feudal nobility was thus beginning to lose ground, the wealthy middle class was slowly gaining ascendancy. Freidank admits this when he states the general rule:

Swâ ein künne ûf stîget,  
daz ander nider sîget. (117, 26 f.)

The blame rested to a great extent upon nobility itself. Instead of defending the poor, says Hugo, they oppress them and deprive them of an honest living. Thus despoiled of their property, the victims are driven to the towns.

Des sint die stete nu wuocherer vol. (4703)

The city is now better qualified for protection, and whoever wishes to live a peaceful life will find it there more easily than with the nobles.<sup>15</sup> Towns and crafts grow in importance. Merchants cross

<sup>12</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 112.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also 6800 f.; 6837 ff.; 3115 ff.; 7036 ff.; 7089 ff.; 16320 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Freidank* 73, 17, and *Anmerkungen* 213 ff.; — 143, 13 f., and *Anmerkungen* 290 f.

<sup>15</sup> Hugo says:

Swer gern habe ungerüewic leben,  
Der sol nâch grôzen êren streben,  
Swer aber gern sî mit gemache,  
Der diene gote under einem obedache  
Und lebe im sanfte an einer stat. *Renner* 6819 ff.

Concerning the rise of the cities, see R. Hâpke, "Die Entstehung der grossen bürgerlichen Vermögen im Mittelalter," *Schmollers Jahrb.* 29 (1905), 1051-1087; G. Schmoller, *Strassburgs Blüte und die volkswirtschaftliche Revolution im XIII. Jahrhundert* (Strassburg u. London,

the sea and risk their lives to increase their possessions (8171 f.). Rulers surround themselves with such mercenary upstarts and prefer them to those of noble birth.<sup>16</sup> Freidank complains:

Man ert nû leider rîchen kneht  
für armen hêrren âne reht. (56, 27 f.)

Once raised aloft, they maintain themselves like great nobles and despise those whose former companions they were. Hugo refers here to an experience of his own:

Swenne si rîten ûf hâhen pferden,  
So enwolten si niht an die erden  
Sehen daz si grûesten mich: (16445 ff.)

The thrifty man is now considered wise and deserving of praise.<sup>17</sup> Honors can be purchased and are often bestowed by those who are themselves devoid of honor, as Freidank remarks:

Êre muoz koufen manic man  
von dem der êre nie gewan. (93, 10 f.)

The farmer, too, acquires self-importance. He covets the life of a courtier and wishes to dress and act like one. Becoming rich and arrogant, he is worse in his extortion than those who lord it over him.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, the poor and oppressed begin to question the right of a favored class.

1875); C. H. Freiherr Roth von Schreckenstein, *Das Patriziat in den deutschen Städten, besonders Reichsstädten* (Tübingen, 1856); R. Sohm, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Städtewesens* (Leipzig, 1890).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Freidank 77, 8 f.; 92, 25; 56, 25 f.; Renner 1064 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Renner 769 f.; 5063 f.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Freidank 122, 11 ff. — See also E. Gothein, "Die Lage des Bauernstandes am Ende des Mittelalters, vornehmlich in Südwestdeutschland," *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst* 4 (1885), 3. — R. Limmer sums up the various circumstances which contributed to raise the position of the farmer in the thirteenth century. He says: "Kirche und Wissenschaft betonten mit Nachdruck 'in remedium animae' die Freiheit der Volksgenossen; durch die Kreuzzüge, das Aufblühen der Städte und die damit verbundene Landflucht, durch den sich im Gefolge der wirtschaftlichen Musterhöfe der Orden entwickelnden rationelleren Kolonisations- und Wirtschaftsbetrieb, verbunden mit gesteigertem Wohlstand und Selbstbewusstsein des Landvolkes, die die starken ständischen Unterschiede zurücktreten liessen, nicht zuletzt durch eigene Zusammenschlüsse und Sicherungen gegen Unrecht und Gewalt besonders von seiten der Ritter

Hugo of Trimberg tells us that one day, as he was riding through a village, a group of drunken farmers surrounded him and plied him with questions as to the origin of nobility.<sup>19</sup> Hugo with some hesitation, but fearing their anger, complies with their request, and explains half-heartedly to them that the inequality of men is due to Noah's curse for the unfilial conduct of his son Cham (1353 ff.). This curse, Hugo continues, falls on all those who do not lead a virtuous life and are disobedient to God's commands. Had Cham been virtuous like his brothers, he would never have been doomed to servility. In order to pacify the farmers, Hugo adds that they (the farmers) are virtually equal to those of noble birth, since they are of free origin.

Ein frî gebûr ist herren genôz: (1407)<sup>20</sup>

He also suggests that there are some noblemen who are inferior to the free farmer because of servile descent (1410 f.).

This theory concerning the origin of nobility was popular with medieval writers and is found already in the *Vorauer Genesis*, written between 1130 and 1140.<sup>21</sup> The poet establishes Sem as the father of the nobles, Japhet as the ancestor of the free middle class, and Cham as the progenitor of the unfree.<sup>22</sup> Underlying this theory is the assumption that class distinctions ultimately revert to virtue, being a reward for noble conduct. Hugo, however, fails to draw any inferences. He himself seems to have had only a vague notion as to its import. He is probably merely rehearsing what he has read or heard. A clergyman, he says, would be better able

und Grundherren, wurde der vielgeschmähte Bauer zu einem nicht mehr zu verachtenden Glied der Gesellschaft emporgehoben." *Op. cit.*, 50 f.

<sup>19</sup> They asked:

Wâ von einer edel wêre,  
Der ander unedel, der ander frî,  
Der ander eigen. (1338 ff.)

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Heusler, "Der Bauer als Fürstengenoss," *Zs. d. Savignyst.* Germ. Abteil. VII (Weimar, 1887), 235 f.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. Ehrismann, *LG.* II, 1, 99.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. Diemer, *Deutsche Gedichte des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts*, 15, 3 ff.; F. Vogt, *Bedeutungswandel des Wortes edel*, 6 and 30; J. Petersen, *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe*, 70 f.



to give a satisfactory explanation of this perplexing question (1341 ff.).

The fact, however, that new men were constantly rising from the lower classes and were procuring titles of nobility set the didactic writers thinking. They began to define nobility. Such attempts were still feeble and vague but they supplied a basis for writers who followed. What, these poets ask themselves, constitutes nobility? Is it noble birth, or wealth and ancestral virtue, or, perhaps, honorable titles bestowed by princes? These, the writers decided, were mere externals and of negligible importance. Virtue or *tugent* was the essential and determining factor.<sup>23</sup>

The author of the *Winsbecke* formulates in rather specific terms his conception of nobility saying:

Sun, hōch geburt ist an dem man  
und an dem wibe gar verlorn,  
dā wir niht tugende kiesen an, (28, 1 ff.)

He becomes still more definite when he continues:

der tugende hât, derst wol geborn  
und êret sîn geslehte wol.  
ich hân ze vriunde mir erkorn  
den nidern baz, der êren gert,  
vür einen hōhen sunder tugent, (28, 5 ff.)

Thus he throws the emphasis from noble birth as an essential quality to moral excellence and even intimates the superiority of this moral nobility.

Virtue, says Thomasin, should be preferred to wealth and noble birth (1597 ff.), for moral nobility is the only true nobility.

niemen ist edel niwan der man  
der sîn herze und sîn gemüete  
hât gekêrt an rehte güete. (3880 ff.)

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<sup>23</sup> In medieval parlance *tugent* was the sum total of moral and social excellence, including not only a virtuous disposition but also the actual proof of moral rectitude. It was equivalent on the one hand to etiquette, behavior, and therefore synonymous with *zuht*, *hövescheit*, *guote site*, but it also meant moral superiority, or right conduct according to ethical principles. Ehrismann says: "mhd. *tugent* (zu *touc* taugen, tüchtig sein) bedeutet Tüchtigkeit jeder Art, nicht nur sittliche Vollkommenheit (virtus), sondern auch gesellschaftliche Fertigkeit." *LG*. II, 2, 19. Cf. also *ibid.*, 315; A. Nolte, *ZfdA*. 52 (1910/11), 61 ff.; H. Kissling, *Die Ethik Frauenlobs* (Halle, 1926), 67 ff.

He who is of noble birth ought also to possess moral nobility, for:

sin geburt gert zaller vrist  
daz er wol und rehte tuo. (3868 f.)

If he fails to act as becomes a nobleman, he dishonors his rank (3863 ff.) and becomes doubly blameworthy, because his high birth increases his guilt.<sup>24</sup> Ancestral wealth and virtue, however, do not make a man noble; he must be noble himself.<sup>25</sup> It is the virtuous disposition which exalts a man, not his noble descent. He may be of an illustrious family and nevertheless indulge in vice, using his rank as a shield for his evil deeds.<sup>26</sup>

reht tuon daz ist hüfscheit (3920),

says Thomasin, and

swelch man hât einen hüfschen muot,  
der tuot mit rehte swaz er tuot. (3921 f.)

The writers emphasize very forcefully the intimate relationship existing between moral nobility and practical virtue. Thus Freidank:

Swer rehte tuot derst wol geboren:  
ân tugent ist adel gar verlorn. (54, 6 f. and 64, 13)  
sost nieman edel âne tugent. (53, 18),

and Hugo:

Ein edelinc tuôt edellîchen, (1421)  
Ein edel kint hât edel site, (1425)  
Êre hât aleine mit tugenden pfiht. (906)  
Friunde und guot gebent nieman tugent. (1429)

If moral nobility, says Hugo, is supported by wealth and honorable position, it will be still more prominent (1431 f.), since the world becomes cognizant of it. Those in responsible places are always observed (559 ff.; 1051 f.). An honorable position, however, does not of itself confer nobility. Freidank says:

“ sin geburt minnert sine êre. *Wälsche Gast* (3872)  
Freidank expresses the same opinion when he says:

Sin selbes schande er mêret,  
der sin geslechte unêret. (118, 3 f.)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 3873 ff.; 4281 f.; 4447 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 4455 ff.

Ere kan nieman genden,  
gaeb er mit tûsent henden. (93, 18 f.)

If honor and power were distributed according to virtue, many a lord would find himself in his servant's place, while many a servant would possess the rights of a lord (76, 19 ff.).

Thus the attitude of the didactic writers toward birth and descent is obvious. They do not consider them integral parts of moral nobility, but, insofar as they are necessary to let moral nobility display itself, they are conditions of it. Freidank in one place is still more daring. He intimates that servility even does not bar a man from acquiring true nobility. He says:

Er si eigen oder frî,  
der von geburt niht edel si,  
der sol sich edel machen  
mit tugentlichen sachen. (54, 8 ff.)

Yet for the most part the didactic writers still had faith in the upper classes as the natural supporters of moral excellence. The nobleman, they argued, was raised above his fellowmen by signal rights and privileges. In return for these, special demands were made both on his public and private character. The desire to make the nobleman worthy of his high place actuated the didactic writers in defining his obligations and persuading him to meet them.

It is futile to search for a clear and consistent conception of an ethical code in the sources. Elaborate and confused lists of virtues are found in each one of the didactic writers. The practice of all eminent virtues is enjoined upon the nobleman and is, in turn, required of all the other classes. Hugo in particular is fond of generalizing vices as well as virtues.

However, the moral code obtaining for knighthood at its best is still discernible in their writings, especially in Thomasin's *Wälsche Gast*. Ehrismann in his excellent study—*Die Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems*<sup>27</sup>—traces the moral code of knighthood back to Aristotle's system of practical philosophy, which, modified through Cicero's *De officiis*, supplied the basis for medieval thought.<sup>28</sup> The *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* of Guillaume de

<sup>27</sup> *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 137-216. — Cf. also G. Ehrismann, "Über Wolframs Ethik," *ZfdA.* 49 (1907-8), 405-465.

<sup>28</sup> "Die Stoa, speciell Cicero, liefert Form und Gedanken." J. Stelzen-

Conches<sup>29</sup> was the medium by which Cicero's catalogue of duties passed into the moral code of medieval knighthood.<sup>30</sup>

The knightly virtues demanded by medieval writers are, as Ehrismann<sup>31</sup> has pointed out, chiefly Aristotelian. They descended through Cicero, Ambrose, Augustine, Guillaume de Conches, and others to the didactic writers, and comprised the inevitable four: justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance.<sup>32</sup> Added to these were the Christian virtues of faith, hope, charity, and humility. The didactic writers, especially Thomasin and Hugo, tried to effect a reconciliation between pagan and Christian virtues, following therein the vogue of early ecclesiastical writers. Moral philosophy, however, supplied in the main the virtues required of a nobleman.

Justice holds an important place in the hierarchy of virtues. The writers look upon it primarily as a guide which nobles must follow in their relations toward God as well as toward their fellow-men. Thomasin devotes the entire ninth book<sup>33</sup> to an exposition of the medieval conception of *iustitia*.<sup>34</sup> The author of the *Winsbecke*, summing up his advice to his son, says:

wirt gotes minne nimmer vrl,  
wis wårhaft, zühtic sunder wanc.                     (56, 7 f.)

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berger, *Die Beziehungen der frühchristlichen Sittenlehre zur Ethik der Stoa* (München, 1933), 234.

<sup>29</sup> Lateinisch, altfranzösisch und mittelniederfränkisch hg. von John Holmberg (*Arbeten utgivna med understöd av Vilhelm Ekmans universitetsfond*, Uppsala 37), Uppsala, 1929.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. G. Ehrismann, *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 142; H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 138.

<sup>32</sup> Regarding their treatment in Christian ethics, see J. Stelzenberger, *op. cit.*, ch. X, "Das Schema der vier Kardinaltugenden," 355-378.

<sup>33</sup> Verses 12223-13564.

<sup>34</sup> The term *reht* had a wider connotation in mhg. than in modern usage. It included everything, "was einer person oder einem dinge vermöge eines inneren oder äusseren gesetzes oder auch vermöge geltender sitte zukommt" (Benecke-Müller-Zarncke II, 1, p. 618), namely, "sowohl das, was sie zu leisten, als das, was sie zu beanspruchen hat" (H. Paul, *DWB.* 3. Aufl., 408). — "Da die verschiedenen Stände im Mittelalter unter verschiedenem Rechte standen, ist 'reht' auch Ausdruck des Standesrechts und der Standesplicht und dadurch oft des Standes selbst." M. Mackensen, "Soziale Forderungen und Anschauungen der frühmittelhochdeutschen Dichter," *Neue Heidelberger Jahrb.* N. F. (1925), 146.

His admonition, *wis wârhaft*, refers to the virtue of justice, the obligation of which he had previously explained.<sup>35</sup> Freidank often speaks about *reht*, and even has a special section on it.<sup>36</sup> Hugo's work is one long complaint against the injustice reigning in this world.

The nobleman, because of his position as administrator and upholder of the law, needed the virtue of justice. Thomasin laments that many study *decreta* and *leges* for the sole purpose of practicing deceit (9151), and for the sake of enriching themselves (9179 f.). It is, therefore, the first duty of a ruler to establish order in this matter.<sup>37</sup> Human society, he says, cannot exist without justice.<sup>38</sup> Even thieves cannot get along without it,<sup>39</sup> for, he continues, those who practice highway robbery wish to divide the booty equally (12379 ff.).<sup>40</sup> A lord should judge fairly the rich and the poor (12430) and should not swerve from justice because of

Barmunge, vorht, minn und unminn,  
geheiz, gâbe, nît und unsin, (12483 f.)

<sup>35</sup> Winsbecke 52, 1-55, 10. Cf. also S. Anholt, "Zum Text des Winsbeken," *ZfdA.* 68 (1931), 131.

<sup>36</sup> *Bescheidenheit* 50, 16-51, 12. Cf. Hans Fehr, *Das Recht in der Dichtung* (Bern, 1931), 160-163.

<sup>37</sup> Thomasin says:

ein herre der rihten niht getar,  
der macht sîn liute tumbe gar.  
ein herre zage machen kan  
kûen wider sich einn lîhten man.  
ob er gebieten niht getar,  
er krenket sîn gebet gar. (1741 ff.)

Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 197, and *Renner* 8823 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Daz reht ist über al  
an allen dingen mâze, wâge, zal.  
An reht mac niemen genesen. (12375 ff.)

<sup>39</sup> jâ mac ein diep An reht niht wesen (12378)

<sup>40</sup> Thomasin borrows here from the *Moralis Philosophia*, whose author says: "Cuius tanta vis est, ut nec illi, qui maleficio et scelere pascuntur, possint sine ulla particula iusticie vivere. Nam qui eorum cuipiam, qui una latrocinantur, furatur aliquid aut eripit, is nec in latrocinio sibi locum relinquit. Archipirata, si non equabiliter predam dispertiat, aut interficiatur a sociis aut relinquitur." (Holmberg, 12, 19 ff.) — Cf. also H. Teske, 183 and 199.

Freidank says that many a judge is now in league with thieves (48, 5 f.). The writers agree that justice requires above all subjection to God as the author of power. To Him every lord must give an account, and it will fare ill with him if he has failed to judge rightly.<sup>41</sup>

Prudence, likewise requisite for the nobleman, is called by the didactic writers *bescheidenheit*. This virtue was considered essential to all moral virtues, for without its light any virtue might become a vice through excess or misdirection. Freidank's book is named *Bescheidenheit*,

diu aller tugende kröne treit. (2)<sup>42</sup>

With the help of prudence a nobleman should determine what to seek and what to avoid. Prudence, says Hugo, teaches foresight.<sup>43</sup> This virtue, according to Thomasin, has to control the gifts of the body—the *bona corporis*:

sterk, snelle, glust, schoene, behendekeit. (9738),

as well as teach the fickleness of fortune and its goods:

adel, maht, richtuom, name, hêrschaft. (9740)

Thomasin considers *prudentia* equivalent to *ratio*. *Bescheidenheit*, he says, is the *sinnes rât* (8624) and

Râtiô bescheiden sol  
waz stê übel ode wol, (8827 f.)

Sin has lessened our power of discernment (8593), but we should

<sup>41</sup> Thomasin says:

sô mag ez im niht wol ergên,  
hât er niht gerihtet wol,  
wan im dar nâch geschehen sol. (12408 f.)

Freidank expresses the same sentiment:

Swer unreht wil ze rehte hân,  
der muoz vor gote ze lerze stân. (50, 16 f.)

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Renner 6107 f. and 3825 f.

<sup>43</sup> Wenne der mensche sol vûr sich sehen  
Waz guotes und üfels müge geschehen, (6121 f.)

Guillaume de Conches says: "Huius officia sunt ex presentibus futura perpendere, adversus venientem calamitatem consilio premunire." (Holmberg, 9, 2 f.)

be happy that we still have a part of it (8599). This is for us *grôziu êre* (8597).

Prudence also inculcates *tugent und guote site* (8606), observes Thomasin. The latter included not only morality, but also courtesy, noble behavior.<sup>44</sup> Blood could be expected to tell here.<sup>45</sup> The author of the *Winsbecke* admonishes his son to cultivate courtly behavior.<sup>46</sup> He moreover insists that manners must not be something merely laid on, as one, for example, puts on a garment, but must proceed from within and be thus an expression of a man's character.<sup>47</sup> Courtesy as the virtue of a nobleman was thus supposed to be the outward expression of a fine inward feeling, and the writers com-

<sup>44</sup> L. Diestel defines "guote site," saying: "da bedeutet sie ebensosehr die Sittlichkeit als die Sittigkeit, die strenge Moralität und den äusseren Anstand. Daher sind auch Tugend, hüfscheit, zuht, site, vrumkeit durchaus Synonyma; die Verstösse gegen hüfscheit zeigen den untugendhaften Mann, wie die Laster gegen die gute 'zuht' sind." — "Der Wälsche Gast und die Moral des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Allgemeine Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft und Literatur* (Halle, 1852), 705. — Cf. also G. Ehrismann, *LG.* II, 1, p. 19; A. Nolte, "Zu Gottfrieds Tristan," *ZfdA.* 52 (1910/11), 66-69; A. Bömer, "Anstand und Etikette nach den Theorien der Humanisten," *Neue Jahrb.* 14 (1904), 225.

<sup>45</sup> Hugo says:

Ein edel kint hât edel site, (1425)

Freidank remarks:

Uz ieglichem vazze gât  
als ez innerhalb hât. (111, 2 f.),

and:

Natûre unde gewoneheit  
der beider kraft ist harte breit. (111, 4 f.)

"

Sun, dû solt hovelfche site  
in dînen sinnen lâzen phaden. (38, 1 f.)

<sup>46</sup> He says:

Sun, swer ze blicke vuogē entnimt,  
daz decket doch die lenge niht:  
geribeniu varwe niht enzimt,  
dâ man den schaden blecken siht.  
diu helkeppel sint enwiht,  
diu bî den liuten kleident wol  
und daz in kûndekeit geschiht.  
nû ziehe er sine kappen abe,  
der alsô welle triegen dich,  
und merke, waz er drunder habe. (26, 1 ff.)

Cf. Freidank 44, 13 f.; 45, 6 f.; Renner 683 f.; 6685 f.; 7095 ff.

plain that such is not the case in their times. Often it is nothing more than an artful guise. The predominant evil seems to be, however, that bad manners, the sign of low origin, have entered courtly circles.

Fortitude or, better, courage was the virtue *par excellence* of the medieval knight. Romances of chivalry picture him courting danger for danger's sake, rejoicing in suffering and gladly meeting death, if, by doing so, he could procure renown, a most coveted reward. This spirit still echoes through the *Winsbecke*, whose author mentions courage as one of the virtues necessary for a perfect knight.<sup>48</sup> When you put on your helmet, he says to his son,

zehant wis muotic unde balt. (20, 2)

But Thomasin, Freidank, and Hugo evince by their attitude toward the tournament<sup>49</sup> that they see no virtue in meeting danger for its own sake.

Magnanimity or *höher muot*, a form of sublimated courage,<sup>50</sup> was a virtue exclusively belonging to the nobleman. It is related to the *μεγαλοψυχία* of Aristotle<sup>51</sup> and the *magnanimitas* of Guillaume de Conches.<sup>52</sup> The lion, says Thomasin, signifies *höhen muot* or magnanimity, and a nobleman should have

. . . in sinem muot  
eins lewen herze, (12365 f.);

but he must guard against *übermuot* or pride. If he overrates himself and does not moderate his exercise of power, he overthrows justice, the necessary basis of all power. Thomasin distinguishes between *superbia* and *höhen muot*, saying:

“Sun, wiltû ganzlîch schiltes reht  
erkennen, sô wis wol gezogen,  
getriuwe, milte, küene und sleht, (19, 1 ff.)

Cf. H. Schrade, “Künstler und Welt im deutschen Spätmittelalter,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift* 9 (1931), 11.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. ch. II, 66 f.

<sup>49</sup> Ehrismann says: “im volkstümlichen epos ist hoher muot gesteigertes kraftgefühl und liegt in der heldeneigenschaft der tapferkeit,” *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 164. — Cf. also H. W. Nordmeyer, “Der Hohe Mut bei Reinmar von Hagenau,” *JEGPh.* 31 (1932), 360-394, especially 378, 393, and note 39.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, iii, ff.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Holmberg, pp. 30-32, also G. Ehrismann, *ZfdA.* 56 (1919), 164.



zwischen hôhem muot und übermuot  
ist daz, swer sîn war tuot:  
der hôhe muot getar wol  
nâch rehte tuon daz er sol,  
der übermüetic man wil  
ân reht begên harte vil. (12369 ff.)

The magnanimous man must, therefore, take precaution against inordinate self-esteem as well as against inordinate lust for power.

Ze grôz muotwille wirt nimmer guot, (577),

says Hugo, and if a man knows himself he will scarcely overrate his abilities (10395 f.) and lose thereby God's pleasure and the respect of good men (17797 ff.). A virtuous man, explains Thomasin, does not boast of his accomplishments nor does he seek unmerited praise (3555 ff.). His deeds alone shall recommend him (3661 ff.).<sup>53</sup> He is, indeed, a *namegireger man* (3687), who desires to do more than he is able.<sup>54</sup> Whoever longs for praise, lessens his moral worth.<sup>55</sup> He becomes guilty of pride or *hochvart*, the *vitiorum regina*.<sup>56</sup> Freidank calls *superbia der helle künigin* which brought about the fall of the angels and the banishment from paradise.<sup>57</sup> This sin<sup>58</sup> is denounced by all the writers, especially by Hugo.

Temperance, or *mâze*, is the moderator among the virtues, the ornament of the nobleman's life; *μεσότης*, Aristotle calls it, the right

“ der ist gelobt nâch rehte wol,  
den sîn *wero* loben sol. Wälsche Gast (3679 f.)  
“ man sol tuon reht unde wol  
ân schallen. Ibid. (3708 f.)

Cf. K. Vossler, "Vom sprachlichen und sonstigen Wert des Ruhmes," *DVjschrLW.* 4 (1926), 235 f.

“ wan swelch herre rehte tuot,  
der minnert dâ mit sîn guot,  
tuot erz dar umbe daz er wil  
daz man sage von im vil. Wälsche Gast (3715 ff.)

<sup>53</sup> Gregory the Great, *Moralia* 31, ch. 45, Migne, *PL.* 76, 620.

<sup>54</sup> *Bescheidenheit*, 28, 15.

<sup>55</sup> *hochvart* had a much wider meaning in mhg. than in modern usage as Fr. Neumann points out. He says: "*höchvertic* ist im höchsten Sinne der, dessen Ich sich so vergrössert hat, dass er Gott nicht mehr sieht."—"Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* (1922), 395. Cf. also H. Kissling, *Die Ethik Frauenlobs*, 33 ff.

mean between excess and defect<sup>59</sup> in the sphere of affections and actions. Distinguished from it was the *σωφροσύνη*, directed toward self-control as regards the appetites in particular.<sup>60</sup> Guillaume de Conches defines temperance as the dominion of reason over passion and other importunate motions.<sup>61</sup> The didactic writers adhere to this definition of temperance, as modified by the patristic writers.<sup>62</sup>

In the *Winsbecke*, *mâze* is strictly a knightly virtue. The father exhorts his son to do everything in a becoming manner—

als dir von arte st geslaht. (20, 6)

Well-regulated exterior conduct, which is the indication of a balanced character, is deserving of honor and praise.<sup>63</sup> So important is this virtue for the nobleman, remarks Thomasin, that without it he sinks to the rank of a menial.<sup>64</sup> The author of the *Winsbecke* approaches the Aristotelian concept when he says:

wirf in die mitte dinen sin, (30, 8)

Thomasin, still more explicit, observes:

Zwischen zwein untugenden ist  
ein tugent zaller vrist. (9993 f.)

Humility, he continues, has its place

zwischen höhverte und bloedekeit. (9996)

Since humility is truth (9995), it preserves man from underrating himself and becoming a mean-spirited creature, a sneak, as well

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* II, vi, 15 ff.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, III, x-xii.

<sup>61</sup> "Temperantia est dominium rationis in libidinem et alios motus inportunos." (Holmberg, 41, 10 f.)

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J. Stelzenberger, *Die Beziehungen der frühchristlichen Sittenlehre zur Ethik der Stoa*, 263 ff.

<sup>63</sup> Sun, merke, daz diu mâze gît

vil êren unde werdekeit: *Winsbecke* 31, 1 f.

Thomasin says:

diu mâze gît uns êre und guot, (9947)

Cf. S. Singer, *Mittelalter und Renaissance* (Tübingen, 1910), 22 f.

<sup>64</sup> den herren macht unmâze kneht. (9950)

as from unduly exalting himself.<sup>65</sup> Through *mâze* the natural appetites of man can be directed toward good.<sup>66</sup> Thus anger and love, which God has given us (10109), may, if controlled by reason, become virtues. Thomasin does not, therefore, believe in complete suppression and denial of the passions, but subjects them to the curbing influence of *mâze*. Here *mâze* is very closely related and almost identical with *bescheidenheit*, and Thomasin actually uses the terms interchangeably.

The vices opposed to temperance are chiefly gluttony, drunkenness, and impurity, and the writers complain that many are addicted to them. Freidank has a long section on *trunkenheit* (94-95, 14) and Hugo expatiates on Freidank's terse epigrams.<sup>67</sup> The suppression of the passions rather than a balanced exterior conduct becomes the principal theme both with Freidank and Hugo. Nothing is good without *mâze*, says Freidank (114, 5 f.),<sup>68</sup> and Hugo knows that it is wholesome for everybody, be he knight or farmer (9589). *Rehte mâze* keeps all appetites under perfect control and insures health and happiness.<sup>69</sup>

*Mâze* also must regulate liberality, another virtue particularly becoming the nobleman.<sup>70</sup> *Mülte*, as the didactic writers termed

<sup>65</sup> The author of the *Winsbecke* says:

swer über sich mit hôchvart wil,  
daz im sîn leben mac dar zuo komen,  
daz sich vervellet gar sîn spil.  
ein ieglich man hât êren vil,  
der rehtê in sîner mâze lebet  
und übermizzet niht sîn zil. (41, 2 ff.)

<sup>66</sup> Thomasin observes:

man möhte mit der mâze lère  
die untugent ze tugent bringen. (9986 f.)

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Renner* 9437 ff.; 9446 ff.; 9851 ff.; 10011 ff.; 10045 ff.; 10171 ff.; 10227 ff.

<sup>68</sup> *Mâze* ist ze allen dingen guot: *Renner* 20689.

<sup>69</sup> Hugo says:

Des wirt manic junger lîp begraben,  
Der manic jâr noch hête gelebt,  
Hêt er der mâze niht widerstrebt. (9664 ff.)

<sup>70</sup> Thomasin says:

diu milte gêt die mittern strâze,  
si behaltet unde gît nâch mâze. (10031 f.).

Cf. Fr. Neumann, "Walther von der Vogelweide und das Reich,"

this virtue, consisted in the judicious bestowal of favors and rewards in money or its equivalent upon other individuals.

Aristotle taught liberality in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>71</sup> But it was also a specific Teutonic ideal, harking back to the generosity of the leader toward his companions in arms. Both influences, undoubtedly, determined the attitude of the didactic writers toward liberality, and the Christian ideal of charity suffused and directed this virtue into the right channels which lead to God as the *summum bonum*. Thus the author of the *Winsbecke* admonishes his son to practice *milte*, because God is merciful to those who show mercy to others.<sup>72</sup> Hospitality, or *hûsere*, he says, merits a place among the most exalted virtues (51, 2).

Thomasin devotes the tenth book of his work to an exposition of liberality. *Milte*, he notes, is a child of justice.<sup>73</sup> Like every other virtue, he directs it toward God, and insists that it must be practiced for His sake. He reproves severely one who hesitates to hazard property or life in the service of God, while risking all in less worthy service (1262 ff.). He also blames him who gives for

*DVjschrLW*. 1 (1923), 518. Concerning the high place which the virtue of generosity occupied among medieval virtues, see the interesting study by M. P. Whitney, "Queen of Mediaeval Virtues: Largesse," *Vassar Mediaeval Studies* (New Haven, 1923), 183-215.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. IV, i ff.

<sup>72</sup>

. . . swer dir sinen kumber klage  
in scham, über den erbarme dich:  
der milte got erbarmet sich  
über alle, die erbarmic sint.

(10, 3 ff.)

and:

Den armen gip, snft unde brich  
mit willen dñer reinen habe:

(47, 5 f.).

"Die Gastfreundschaft wurde von alters her in deutschen Landen gepflegt. Dem reisenden Fremdling ein offenes Haus und herzliches Willkommen zu bieten, war immer deutscher Brauch." J. Sasa, *Zur Kultur- und Sittengeschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, Diss. (Berlin, 1892), 55 and note 32.

<sup>73</sup>

diu milte ist gar des rehtes kint (13580 and 14125).

The *liberalitas* in Guillaume de Conches is regulated by justice. Cf. Holmberg, 13 ff. Hugo says:

Swer meister oder rihter wird gegeben  
Über sin genôz, der sol mit gûete  
Und niht mit hôchfart si behûete

(508 ff.).

the sake of honor,<sup>74</sup> or out of a desire for praise. The jongleur eulogizes freely and is well rewarded for his flattery; a deserving, truthful man, however, often obtains no compensation for his service (3791 ff.).<sup>75</sup> *Milte* has its root in *richem muot*, says Thomasin.

ai ist des richen muotes schin (13954).

Liberality is particularly the virtue of a true nobleman though he must be rich in order to be able to practice it (13997 ff.).<sup>76</sup> Yet a good intention is worth more than the best gift (13993 ff.), and he who is unable to give, adds Freidank, should, at least, show good will (110, 25 ff.). A nobleman without liberality is a sham. Neither his body nor his apparel will make him noble, declares Hugo; nobility must be based on *tugent*, and *milte* is a way of exhibiting virtue (18933 ff.).<sup>77</sup>

The true noble must take care how he exercises this liberality. Since promiscuous giving does more harm than good, he must prudently consider to whom he gives, and regulate the quantity of his benefactions. Rewards must be given where they do most good, that is, to worthy and noble persons. The special objects of *milte* are the poor, says Thomasin.<sup>78</sup> This did not mean, however, the indiscriminate giving of doles to those who have their poverty as their only recommendation and who will be as needy tomorrow as they are today. The object of liberality must be deserving of help.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> doch ist ez alsô komen her,  
daz wir durch êre geben mêr  
dan durch got: (3795 ff.)

<sup>75</sup> Cf. 3791-3808 and 13701 ff. Hugo also speaks against the jongleur and flatterer, who

. . . gâbe in nîmt und dar nâch liuget. Renner 688.

Cf. H. Steinger, "Fahrende Dichter im deutschen Mittelalter," *DVjschrLW.* 8 (1930), 74 f.

<sup>76</sup> Thomasin says:

ist eines mannes biutel laere,  
swie gerne er danne milte waere,  
er mac her ûz geschûtten niht, (14025 ff.)

<sup>77</sup> Cf. also 17399.

<sup>78</sup> der milte materge sint arme liute: (14117)

<sup>79</sup> Freidank explains this when he says:

Man sol sich gerne erbarmen  
über die *edeln armen*. (40, 15 f.)

Cf. R. Limmer, *op. cit.*, 59 f.

Hugo expects the nobleman to share his goods with rich and poor alike (11200).

Regarding the manner of spending, Thomasin says:

diu milt wil daz man gebe wol. (13628).

Therefore, he observes, the gift must be proportionate to the moral worth of a man.<sup>80</sup> It also must be readily granted, not extorted by repeated petition. A gift bought by pleading cannot be termed a gift.<sup>81</sup> Moreover it must come from a generous heart in order that liberality may be a real virtue.<sup>82</sup> Gratitude is, of course, expected from the recipient of favors, but its absence, says Thomasin, must never deter a nobleman from giving again (14355 ff.). A kind deed should be quickly forgotten by the giver although he, who receives it should remember to whom he owes his happiness (14467 ff.).<sup>84</sup> He should, however, not immediately repay the kindness, for that would be indicative of a proud spirit, which does not wish to be indebted to anyone (14529 ff.).<sup>85</sup> Further-

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\*\*                    diu milte machts niht alle genôz:  
                         dem gît si kleine und disem grôz,  
                         eim iegliche nâch siner werdekeit, (13595 ff.)

Guillaume de Conches says: "Quamvis autem omni petenti dare debeas, tamen in beneficio habendus est delectus dignitatis." (Holmberg, 16, 20 f.)

\*\*                    swer sich ze lange biten lât,  
                         wizzet daz er verkoufet hât  
                         swaz er im dâne gît. (14261 ff.)

and Freidank:

Diu gâbe tuot vil selten wol,  
die man mit schame erbiten sol:  
diu gâbe in höher wurde lît,  
die man ungebeten gît. (111, 24 ff.)

Guillaume de Conches says: "Non tulit gratis qui, cum rogaret, accepit; nulla enim res carius constat quam que precibus empta est." (Holmberg, 14, 14 ff.) Cf. also *ibid.*, 8 ff. But Hugo observes:

Die rîchen wöllen, daz man si flêhe. (1973)

\*\*                    Diu milte ist von tugende niht,  
                         diu durch fremeden rât geschiht. *Freidank* 87, 12 f.

and:

Diu milte niht von herzen gât,  
swer riuwe nâch der gâbe hât. *Ibid.*, 86, 16 f.

\*\* Cf. Holmberg, 15, 23 ff.    \*\* Cf. *ibid.*, 15, 7 ff.    \*\* Cf. *ibid.*, 19, 14 ff.

more, whatever serves to honor a man should be given publicly (14593 f.), but what tends merely to relieve poverty should be bestowed in secret (14605 ff.). Gifts that might harm the recipient should never be given (14609),<sup>86</sup> but whatever is presented should be suitable and lasting (14624).

Finally, liberality must be proportioned to income.<sup>87</sup> One must give according to his means, not too little and not too much. Spending in excess violates *māze* and threatens impoverishment and even ultimate loss of nobility.<sup>88</sup> But Hugo complains that liberality is no longer esteemed or exercised.<sup>89</sup> An example he gives throws an interesting sidelight on certain practices of the time. Some lords, he says, promise their old clothes to poor servants but then sell them instead to the Jews, from whom the poor must redeem them.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 17, 23 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 20, 24 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Thomasin says:

	Swër bescheidenlichen geben wil,	
	gebe niht ze lützel noch ze vil.	(14177 f.)
and:		
	der gît nâch rehte zaller zît	
	der nâch siner habe gît.	(14185 ff.)

Freidank voices the same sentiments, always emphasizing the idea of *rehte milte*.

Rehtiu milte nie verdarp,	
sô karkheit grôze schande erwarp.	
erge hât dicke erworben	
daz kûnege sint verdorben.	(87, 16 ff.)

Cf. also 86, 18 f.; 111, 22 f.; 77, 22 f.; 77, 26 f.

<sup>89</sup>

Milte was grôziu tugent hie vor,	
Swër milte nu wêre, der wêr ein tôr:	(9191 f.)

Cf. E. Michael, "Deutsche Charitas im 13. Jahrhundert," *Zs. f. katholische Theologie* 23 (1899), 201-226.

<sup>90</sup>

Si gelobent ofte ir alten kleider	
Irn armen dienern, die si leider	
Mûezen ze den jûden loesen.	
SôgetAn herren dekeinen sô boesen	
Roc habent, den si von der hant	
Frlich lâzen âne pfant:	
Zwuo hosen oder ein keppelfn	
Muoz einer loesen ze dem wîn,	
Der ez haben wil von in.	(15171 ff.)

These, then, were the virtues which the didactic writers thought especially necessary for the nobleman. He was expected to be just, prudent, courteous, courageous, temperate, and liberal in order to be worthy of his high place in society. This list could readily be expanded to include other virtues, since, as was remarked above, there existed no fixed code, and any eminent virtue might be added. Several lists of virtues are given by the writers. Thus the author of the *Winsbecke* has the following:

. . . wis wol gezogen,  
getriuwe, milte, küene und sleht,                    (19, 2 f.)

and Hugo:

Māze, gedult, zuht, kiusche und ère                    (21763)  
Wårheit, zuht, triuwe und scham:                    (2151)

and again:

Triuwe, zuht und wårheit,  
Dêmuot, scham, einveltikeit,  
Kiusche und māze                    (1145 ff.)

Most of these virtues fall under one or other of the basic qualities considered above.

The nobility of the thirteenth century in Germany was not, as has been pointed out, a closed caste strictly cut off from the rest of society by insurmountable barriers. There was a continual penetration of men of lower origin and circumstance upward into the privileged plane of the nobles, especially through the institution of knighthood. The bourgeois was gradually coming to the fore and some of his ideals began to permeate even courtly society.<sup>21</sup> This new spirit, though still undeveloped and scarcely discernible, shows itself in the didactic writers in various ways: instructions in polite behavior become necessary, bourgeois virtues, such as

<sup>21</sup> W. Stammler says: "Ebenso hegen nun edelgeborene Herren die neue 'bürgerliche' Weltanschauung." — "Die bürgerliche Dichtung des Spätmittelalters," *ZfdPh.* 53 (1928), 24. — W. Sombart believes that the bourgeois did not change the culture of the nobleman in the thirteenth century. He says: "Damals herrscht der Feudalismus noch so gut wie unbeschränkt: der Adel besteht fast ausschliesslich aus ritterbürtigen Grundbesitzern; der Roturier, der in ihn hineingeschoben wird, verändert nicht im geringsten den Lebensstil der feudalen Welt, an die er sich innerlich und äusserlich binnen ganz kurzem anpasst, die ihn gleichsam einsaugt wie ein Schwamm eine kleine Menge Flüssigkeit." *Luxus und Kapitalismus* (München u. Leipzig, 1913), 20. The didactic writers do not bear out this opinion.



economy and contentment, are required also of the nobleman, and wealth becomes not only a disturbing factor but a vital problem.

The nobleman of olden times, the highborn aristocrat, had little need for special rules of etiquette. His noble birth and his service as page and squire were supposed to develop in him the necessary dispositions for polite conduct on every occasion. Born and bred in distinguished surroundings, poise and grace became natural to him. The parvenu nobility, however, had to be taught. The more numerous it became, the greater was the need for books of etiquette, and instructions in courtesy and table manners appear at the end of the thirteenth and especially in the fourteenth century.<sup>92</sup> The *Disticha Catonis*<sup>93</sup> and the *Facetus cum nihil utilius*<sup>94</sup> became familiar schoolbooks which supplied rules for good conduct, and which were, in all probability, known also to the didactic writers.<sup>95</sup>

Neither the author of the *Winsbecke* nor Freidank give detailed rules of courtly behavior. The father in the *Winsbecke* merely admonishes his son not to interrupt the conversation of others (10, 1 f.), and to restrain his tongue,

daz si iht ûz dem angen var: (24, 2)

Thomasin, however, devotes much space to rules of etiquette. He admonishes noble youth not to follow

der ungeslahten kinde spil (303),

but to observe what

. . . schoeniu hovezuht si lère. (302)

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<sup>92</sup> Walther Rehm remarks: "Charakteristischer Weise tritt erst jetzt, im 14. Jahrhundert die literarische Gattung der 'Hofzucht' hervor, die nun im Gegensatz zur Literatur der Blütezeit direkte Unterweisung in den Anstands- und Sittenlehren gibt, weil sich das höfliche Benehmen eben nicht mehr von selbst versteht, der Ritter um 1200 aber es nicht nötig hatte, sich darin ausführlich durch eigens dazu geschriebene Lehrgedichte unterrichten zu lassen — er lernte aus den idealen Gestalten der Romane." — "Kulturverfall und Spätmittelhochdeutsche Didaktik," *ZfdPh.* 52 (1927), 303. — Cf. also A. E. Schönbach, *Die Anfänge des Minnesanges* 77. — K. Lucae, "Beiträge zur Erklärung des Parzival," *ZfdA.* 30 (1886), 371, refers to Thomasin's "table manners," saying that they are considered "das älteste, in deutscher sprache abgefasste verzeichnis derartiger regeln."

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Introduction, 10.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Introduction, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 123 f.

Shouting and too much drinking, characteristics of the *tavernaere* (298), must be avoided by the *edeliu kint* (337), who should practice at home what they have seen and learned at court (351 ff.). They should, above all, treat their relatives and comrades well (363 ff.),<sup>98</sup> receive guests honorably (377 ff.), speak in a subdued tone of voice (405 f.), assume a fitting posture when sitting, standing, or riding (411 ff.), and practice composure of countenance as well as of the hands (439 ff.). Added to these are special rules—they are listed in detail—to be observed at table (471 ff.).<sup>97</sup>

Hugo evinces his familiarity with the canons of polite behavior<sup>98</sup> without, however, laying down any precepts, since to prescribe for the nobles was foreign to his purpose. He takes, on the other hand, exception to vulgar expressions used by some in higher positions, stating that in times gone by such things were unheard of.<sup>99</sup>

Still more important is the fact that the writers advocate for the man of noble birth the practice of virtues which are especially bourgeois.<sup>100</sup> Hugo preaches contentment to all classes of mankind.<sup>101</sup> Saving becomes a virtue, not a mere necessity for the poor, and extends to the profitable use of time as well as the useful employment of the powers of body and soul.

Wê dem der niht gesparen kan! (14982)

exclaims Hugo. Thomasin, on his part, enjoins on every nobleman

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Guillaume de Conches (Holmberg, 25, 3 ff.).

<sup>97</sup> Rückert in his *Anmerkungen*, p. 522, gives the *Disciplina clericalis* of Petrus Alfonsus as one of the sources. — Cf. H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 128.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Renner 5283 ff. and 5550 ff.

<sup>100</sup> Man hoert von herren etswenne ouch wort,  
Diu wilent von niemanne wurden gehört  
Denne von gar verschemter diet,  
Die man von frumen liuten schiet. Renner 13725 ff.

<sup>100</sup> On the bourgeois spirit see W. Sombart, *Der Bourgeois* (München u. Leipzig, 1913), 135-212.

<sup>101</sup> He says:

Wizzet er ist ein sêlic man,  
Der guot vûr genemen kan,  
Und swen benûeget des er hât,  
Ez st getranc, spise oder wât. (13293 ff.);

cf. also 21563 f.; 11229; 23272 f.; and *Freidank* 43, 8 f.

the duty to lay aside something each year for emergency purposes, so that in time of war he need not press his subjects too severely (14214 ff.). Wastefulness is as much to be avoided as avarice.<sup>102</sup> The judicious use of time is of great importance, for time once lost, says Thomasin, does not return (755 f.). Time is one of God's most precious gifts to us,<sup>103</sup> and should not be wasted in reading fabulous stories, he further observes (1113 ff.). On the other hand, he lays stress both on the value and the need of reading history, especially of chronicles, which relate facts. Each king, he says,

sol sines rîches kronik hân (10659).

Imagination and feeling are disparaged, and writings which relate the plain truth unmixed with imagination are preferred (1140 f.). Hugo maintains that poetry should have a moral aspect (1179 ff.). In it the reader should find

. . . tugent, zuht und êre,  
Hübscheit der werlde und ouch die lêre,  
Von der sîn leben wirt genême (1239 ff.)<sup>104</sup>

The term *arbeit* likewise assumes a new significance. Work was, indeed, required of the medieval knight as one of his chivalrous duties;<sup>105</sup> but it was work in the service of his lady, participa-

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Renner 18955 ff.; 18965 ff.; *Wälsche Gast* 14240 ff.

<sup>103</sup> Höchgültiger gâbe wart nie geben  
Dem menschen ûf erden ze sînem leben  
Denne einiu, die ez gar offenlich  
Verkrâmet oft und jêmerlich:  
Daz ist diu zît, die nieman kan  
Vergelten swie vil er ie gewan. Renner 24093 ff.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. E. Seeman, "Hugo von Trimberg und die Fabeln seines Renners," *Münchener Archiv* 6 (1923), 2 ff.; W. Stammler, "Die Wurzeln des Meistergesangs," *DVjschrLW.* 1 (1923), 555.

<sup>105</sup> Thus we read in Hartmann's *Erec* (written after 1190):

. . . swer sîne sache  
wendet gar ze gemache,  
dem sol êre abe gân  
und schande sîn bereit.  
wer gewan ie frumen ân arbeit? (4095 ff.)

tion in adventurous exploits, not work undertaken with the purpose of earning a living or supplying the wants of a family. We still find this old conception in the *Winsbecke*.<sup>106</sup> With Hugo of Trimberg, *arbeit* becomes a moral obligation. Everyone must work in order to earn a livelihood (22043 f.). Sloth, or *lázheit*, is one of the capital sins (15962 ff.), and Hugo would gladly lessen the number of holidays because, he says, *guot arbeit* is much better for body and soul than *schedelichiu müezikeit* (22522 ff.).

Great wealth, however, must never be the goal of human activity. But the striving for it characterizes the age, as the writers repeatedly complain. Its votaries are ascending the social scale and are forming, as it were, a nobility of wealth. The didactic poets are unanimous in condemning such a nobility. Material riches, while necessary and useful, do not constitute the basis for nobility. Wealth is, in its essence, vulgar, not noble. Instead of satisfying the possessor it creates a need and craving for more.<sup>107</sup> He who is ruled by riches is, indeed, ignoble, says Freidank;<sup>108</sup> a penny-server, says Thomasin.<sup>109</sup> Wealth often perverts a virtuous man,<sup>110</sup>

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or:                                      wer bejagte noch ie  
   mit sláfe dehein ére                                      (2526 f.)

Cf. also 2745; 9888 ff. Edition by Fedor Bech, *Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig, 1893).

<sup>106</sup>                                      waz touc ein junger lip verlegen,  
   der ungemach niht liden kan                                      (42, 5 f.)

and:                                      Sun, wizzest daz, verlegenheit  
   ist gar dem jungen manne ein slac.  
   ez si dir offentlich geseit,  
   daz niemen ére haben mac  
   noch herzen liebe sunder klac  
   gar áne kumber und áne nôt:                                      (43, 1 ff.)

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 8136 ff.; 2735 ff.; 2923 ff.; Freidank 41, 10 f.; 41, 18 f.; also Guillaume de Conches, who says: "quia amorem habendi nullus satiat questus, nam improbe crescunt divitie, tamen curte nescio quid semper abest rei."—and: "Crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam maiorumque fames." (Holmberg, 62, 9 ff.).

<sup>108</sup>                                      Swelch man ist des guotes kneht,  
   der hât iemer schalkes reht                                      (56, 16 f.)

<sup>109</sup>                                      swer sinem guot niht hêrschen kan,  
   der ist der phenning dienstman.                                      (2819 f.)

Cf. also 2810 ff. — Guillaume de Conches, enumerating the objections against

and only he who is truly noble is able to resist its baneful influence.<sup>111</sup> Wealth, therefore, is a relative good, and its merit depends upon the use which the possessor makes of it.<sup>112</sup> The writers, especially Freidank, point out that wealth is necessary for the nobleman to enable him to exercise his virtues and thus win the esteem of his fellowmen;<sup>113</sup> but "enough is better than too much."<sup>114</sup>

It is evident that the question of wealth had even at this time begun to agitate the minds of men.<sup>115</sup> The problem was very

the love of money, mentions, as sixth reason, that money demands the servitude of the one who seeks it. Cf. Holmberg, 63, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 8074 ff.; *Freidank* 43, 18 f.; 56, 11 f.; *Renner* 916 f.; 972; 5947 f.; 15509 f.; 8600. — Guillaume de Conches says: "Perdidit arma, locum virtutis deseruit qui semper in augenda festinat et obruitur re." (Holmberg, 61, 5 f.)

<sup>111</sup> Freidank remarks:

Ein boese man unsanfte treit  
êre unde grôze rîcheit. (88, 27 f.)

Cf. also 41, 8 f. Thomasin says:

ein man mac guot und êre erwerben,  
ist er guot und tugenthafft, (8192 f.).

Cf. 8197 ff. Cf. also *Wälsche Gast* 817 ff.; *Freidank* 56, 13 f.; 58, 1 ff.; 57, 14 f.; 57, 24 ff.; 40, 19 f.; 147, 23 ff.

<sup>112</sup> Hugo of Trimberg points this out, when he says:

Swem êre ist lieber denne guot,  
Selten er immer missetuot;  
Swer ân êre gewinnet guot,  
Der hât sîn sêle niht wol behuot;  
Guot ân êre wirt nimmer guot,  
Guot mit êren wunder tuot; (8587 ff.)

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Freidank* 42, 19 f.; 91, 18 f.; 42, 23 f.; 57, 6 ff.; 57, 10 f.; 126, 11; *Wälsche Gast* 8160 ff.; *Renner* 1559 f.; 6223 ff.; 23113 f.

<sup>114</sup> Freidank says:

genuoc ist bezzer dan ze vil, (61, 21)

Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 8135 and *Renner* 2437 f.

<sup>115</sup> Walther Rehm is overlooking numerous references to the power of money in these early writers. He says: "Bezeichnenderweise erfährt man bei Hugo von Trimberg kaum etwas darüber, wie überhaupt wenig in der höfischen epischen Literatur, deren Idealwelt durch dies Fehlen des Geldtriebes im Gesamten — natürlich gibt es auch hier Ausnahmen — noch näher an das Paradiesische, an das Goldene Zeitalter heranrückt und schon dadurch kluftartig vom Geist des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts sich scheidet."

closely connected and concerned with the rising middle class, which, as time went on, revolutionized the entire social life not only of Germany but of all Europe.

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During the course of the thirteenth century a gradual change takes place in the social life of Germany. Cities become wealthy and more powerful and endanger the existing order of society by bringing into prominence a new social class, the wealthy merchants. The nobles, somewhat degenerated, struggle with the power of wealth. An accompanying feature of this conflict is an altered concept of nobility. Caste distinction as a criterion of nobility ceases to satisfy the moralist and vanishes before his zeal for a moral standard. Inner worth, or moral nobility, which alone abides, becomes the deciding factor in the opinion of the didactic writers. Those desiring to be accounted noble must distinguish themselves by practicing the virtues of the nobleman. In the mutual exchange of ideals, bourgeois virtues find their way into the moral code of the aristocracy. Wealth, although considered almost indispensable for a nobleman, is viewed as a relative good. Its possession alone does not qualify for nobility.

—"Kulturverfall und Spätmittelhochdeutsche Didaktik," *ZfdPh.* 52 (1927), 318. Hugo, however, has a special section "von dem pfenninge" (18983 ff.), and speaks in many other places about the power of wealth. In addition to references already mentioned above, cf. 5066; 7667 f.; 7723 f.; 7099 f.; 8117; 13329 ff.

## CHAPTER IV

### NOBILITY AND CHRISTIAN IDEALS ACCORDING TO THE DIDACTIC WRITERS

The influence of Christianity upon the development of the conception of nobility cannot be overlooked. Moral nobility, while antecedent to Christianity, received its sanction and elevation through Christ's teaching. Men's ideas of human life and especially of social relations were profoundly transformed. The didactic writers, as true exponents of their time and faithful adherents of the Church, reflect the latter's viewpoint quite accurately on the question of aristocracy of birth.

The essential equality of human nature is one of her fundamental principles. St. Paul expresses this conception repeatedly in his letters,<sup>1</sup> and the patristic writers are the heirs of his doctrine.<sup>2</sup> God is the Father of all men, be they high or low, rich or poor, bond or free. He has created man according to His own image and likeness; has made him God-like. This likeness to God is to be found primarily in man's spiritual soul with its intellect and will.<sup>3</sup> It is a natural likeness. Besides this there is the likeness to God which a soul acquires through the possession of sanctifying grace. This likeness transcends human nature; it is supernatural. The didactic writers considered in this study do not clearly distinguish between the natural and the supernatural in this matter. Ordinarily they think of the latter, since they refer to the dignity of a soul possessing sanctifying grace, and the loss of this through sin.<sup>4</sup> Hugo of Trimberg, however, has in mind the natural resemblance when he speaks of the relationship to God which preserved man from complete degradation after his fall:

Sus wêr der mensche schier verwildet,  
Wêr er niht gote gelfch gebildet. (16059 f.)

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Gal.* III, 28; *Eph.* VI, 9; *Col.* III, 9-11; *1 Cor.* XII, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* XVI, 5; Lactantius, *Div. inst.* III, 25, 5 in *CSEL.* XIX, 257, and *ibid.* V, 15, 16 in *CSEL.* XIX, 448; Gregory the Great, *Lib. Past.* III, 5 in Migne, *PL.* 77, 56 and *ibid.*, *Exp. Mor.* XXI, 15 in Migne, *PL.* 76, 203; cf. also Renner 19041 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* 1a, *quaestio* xciii.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Pohle, "Grace," *Catholic Encyclopedia* VI, 706 β. Cf. esp. 707 δ.

Sin wrought havoc with the perfection of God's creation; it made man servile (133 f.). Through baptism, however, he is again restored to his noble estate of kinship with God (24088).<sup>5</sup> Thus all baptized Christians belong to what may be called the Christian nobility. It has its seat in the human soul regenerated through grace.<sup>6</sup> Thomasin calls the soul the *küneginne des libs* (9551 f.), who must rule over body and mind, and subject all movements and actions to her wise control. If, instead of ruling, she lets herself be led by the concupiscence of the flesh and loses her nobility through sin, she will be punished in hell even before the body (9633 f.).<sup>7</sup>

Christian nobility exacts fear of God and fulfillment of His commands.<sup>8</sup> Thomasin takes great pains to explain what is meant by Christian nobility. As creatures of God, he says, we are His children, and, partaking of His nature, we are noble indeed if we live according to His will (3895 ff.). By transgressing God's commandments, man, through his own fault, loses *daz adel daz im got gap* (3888 f.), and choses a father, *der unedel ist* (3891).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Freidank* 21, 4; and *St. John* III, 3 and 5.

<sup>6</sup> Hugo exclaims:

WA wart ie groezer wirdikeit  
An ein sô krankes vaz geleit, (6455 f.);

and:

Swaz man uns lobes und êren an leit,  
Daz kumt von der wirdikeit  
Die got der werden sêle hât geben: (22575 ff.)

Cf. 22825 f.; 24375 f.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning *Freidank's* thoughts about the soul, see Fr. Neumann, "Freidanks Lehre von der Seele," *Festschrift Max H. Jellinek* (Wien u. Leipzig, 1928), 86-96.

<sup>8</sup> Hugo says:

Wenne swelch mensche lebt nâch gotes gebote,  
In dem ist got und ez in gote. (18653)

and:

Alliu *edel* herzen fürhtent got  
Und behaltent gerne sîn gebot:  
Daz tuont *unedel* herzen niht,  
Diu mit untugent habent pfiht (20081 ff.)

Cf. also 5713 f. and 22430 f. Thomasin says:

ich hânz gelesen und vernomen  
daz der gar ein herre ist  
der got dienet zaller vrist. (10566 ff.)



er ist von vrm ein eigen man  
worden,

(4199 f.)<sup>\*</sup>

Equality of all human beings is one of the fundamental tenets of Jewish religion. It is based on the principle that all men are children of the same God, and that all are essentially capable of realizing the good.<sup>10</sup> The close relationship between earth-born man and God, however, which we find in Christianity and which is expressed by the term "Father," is still absent from the pages of the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> With the Jews the concept of God as the creator and ruler of the world, as the lord of His people, is uppermost. They seem to avoid the term "Father" when addressing God. It is Jehovah, rather, Who speaks of Himself as "Father of His children."<sup>12</sup> Thus in the Old Testament God is represented as speaking to David: "I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son."<sup>13</sup> Again it is said of the just man: "he hath God for his father."<sup>14</sup> Concerning the difference between the death of the just and of the wicked, we read: "Behold how they are numbered among the children of God."<sup>15</sup>

The heathens, too, had used the term "father" for their deities as physical progenitors, but this title did not designate the moral relation between the Deity and mankind. The Jews went further.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Cf. Renner 8012 ff.; also St. John VIII, 34 and St. Paul's letter to the Romans II, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the sources quoted by S. Bernfeld, *The foundations of Jewish ethics*, transl. by A. H. Koller (New York, 1929), 150-183, and the bibliographical data on pp. 184-186.

<sup>11</sup> "im ganzen genommen bleibt das Fehlen des Vaternamens im Munde des Beters ein Charakteristikum des AT gegenüber dem NT, in dem der Vatername das ganze Beten der Anhänger Christi durchwärmt und im seligen Bewusstsein einer neu erworbenen, viel höheren Gotteskindschaft immer wieder aus dem Herzen quillt." Th. Paffrath, *Gott Herr und Vater* (Paderborn, 1930), 574.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 570.

<sup>13</sup> II Kings VII, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Wisdom II, 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* V, 5.

<sup>16</sup> "Dass ein solches Wort im Munde der Israeliten einen höheren Sinn und tieferen Gehalt bekam, als es im Munde der Heiden hatte, ist gewiss. Denn nach israelitischer Gotteserkenntnis war Jahwe in ganz anderer Weise der Ursprung, Herr und Beschützer seines Volkes." Th. Paffrath, *op. cit.*, 576 f.

Righteousness or personal merit entitled a man to be called a son of God. Jeremias hoped for the time to come when Israel would invoke the Lord, saying: "Thou art my father."<sup>17</sup> That time appeared when Christ through His redemption established a closer relation between God and the individual, when, as St. Paul says, we "have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: "Abba (Father)."<sup>18</sup>

However close the Jewish concept comes to the Christian idea, it never identifies itself with it. The Christian idea of nobility is unique. No such conception was held by pre-Christian writers. This type of nobility is, moreover, distinct from and vastly superior to that nobility which birth or fortune bestows upon a favored few.<sup>19</sup> The first concern of the writers is the world beyond. Noble birth does not profit a man, says Hugo, if he loses heaven (2376 ff. and 4245 ff.). He alone is truly beautiful, noble, and rich, who attains his final destiny (1453 f.). Exalted rank is often a danger to the soul.<sup>20</sup>

But it is also very important to note that the writers in no way disapprove existing social divisions.<sup>21</sup> God, says Hugo, has created three classes of society and has given to each its special work (2214 ff.). The function of the nobility is to maintain righteousness and justice in the world. It is the intention of the writers, and of Thomasin in particular, to remind the nobles of their high obligation.

<sup>17</sup> *Jer.* III, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Rom.* III, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Freidank says:

Im schadet keiner slahte kleit,  
der ein reinez herze treit: (112, 17 f.)

*Cf. Renner* 20925.

<sup>20</sup> Hugo says:

Maniger heizet ein edel man,  
Des sêle vil bezzer wêre  
Er wêre ein wittragêre. (3120 ff.)

<sup>21</sup> Freidank seems to make an exception in one place, when he says:

Ezn hât nieman eigenschaft  
niuwan got mit sîner kraft:  
lîp sêle êre unde guot  
ist allez lêhen, swie man tuot. (74, 19 ff.)

In reality, however, he merely transfers the feudal idea to man's relationship to God.

Any attempt to push one's way into a higher social category is looked upon as subversive of the natural order willed by God. The author of the *Winsbecke* warns against aiming higher than one's social rank (33, 3; 41, 2), and Thomasin, Freidank, and Hugo are quite emphatic in their denunciations of such unlawful ambition.<sup>22</sup> God's order is reversed, complains Thomasin, and the world is worse on account of it. Those who by right should rule have been deposed, and the unworthy have usurped their place (6426 ff.). Social conditions were much better as long as the natural order was observed and high and low kept their places (6467 ff.). The didactic writers felt that God intended a division into classes since He had created men unequal at birth in character and abilities.

Social differences, says Hugo, are difficult to explain. Some ask, he says,

Wâr ûm unser herre den rîche mache,  
Den arm, (834 f.).

Since nothing happens *ân sache ûf erden* (6853), there must be a reason for this inequality, and Hugo offers the following explanation. Since God, he says, has created man unequal

An stimme, an antlûtze und an muote (839),<sup>23</sup>

it is to be expected that the goods of this world, riches and honors, should be apportioned accordingly. But he hastens to add that the possession of heaven does not depend upon one's station here below (843 ff.). Moreover, from him to whom much is given, much will be required (847 ff.).

In spite of this external superiority of a few, the writers admit the essential equality of all men. According to Christian faith there is no real division between bond or free. All classes are by nature kin, Hugo says in a sermon on pride, and should live like brothers (505 ff.). Those who are appointed masters or judges over their equals should fulfill their duty with humility and wisdom, mindful of their common origin (508 ff.). Freidank says:

Swie diu liute geschaffen sint,  
wir sîn doch alle Adâmes kint. (135, 10 f.)

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 8436; 8678 ff.; *Freidank* 75, 22 f.; *Renner* 4485; 20553 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also 4922 and 16237.

Birth and death are the great levellers of humanity. Hugo sets this forth quite vividly. The child of an emperor is at birth the equal of a shepherd's son (19094 ff.). Neither has crown, silver, or gold, both are helpless and weak, one is *des andern genôz* (19109). After death, when corruption has done its work, no one will be able to distinguish a servant from his master, the rich from the poor, the noble from the ignoble, the good from the bad, youth from old age, the handsome man from the unsightly (24067 ff.). Besides, no one can escape death, no matter what his rank or position.<sup>24</sup> The same is true concerning other evils of life. Exalted rank is no guarantee against misery and cares.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the noble and powerful have little ground for pride and arrogance. They should be grateful to God, Hugo says, for all He has given them

An bürgen, an steten, an liuten, an lande,  
 An ezzen, an trinken, an schoenem gewande,  
 An wilde, an zam, an schoenen pferden,  
 An maniger leie wunne ûf erden, (1283 ff.).

Although men are equal in Christ and in the facts of birth and death, they differ in all other ways. Some are endowed with strength and beauty, others are weak and ugly. Some are virtuous, others incline to vice. Some are capable with the hand, others with the brain. Such diversity, they argue, could have been ordained by God to no other purpose than to preserve order in this world. Thus is the necessity of a superior class established by the didactic writers upon the basis of what they consider God's decree. The stability of society, they felt, depended upon the preservation of this order.

They object, however, with the exception of Thomasin, to a nobility within the Church.<sup>26</sup> Due to existing political conditions, all the more important places in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were generally reserved for men of noble blood.<sup>27</sup> Bishops and abbots

<sup>24</sup> Freidank says:

Der keiser sterben muoz als ich,  
 des mac ich im genôzen mich. (74, 5 f.)

Cf. also Renner 19091 f.; 23409 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Freidank 58, 9 f.; 74, 1 ff.; 76, 14 ff.; 119, 22 f.; Renner 23401 f.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ch. II, 50 f.

<sup>27</sup> E. Michael cites several reasons for the increase of nobility at cathe-

were at the same time dukes or counts and controlled immense territorial possessions. They were servants of the state as well as of the Church, and the didactic writers complain that they were more concerned about their military affairs than about their duties as pastors of souls. It is this abuse which the writers oppose, and thus they range themselves with a movement of reform which had already begun within the Church itself, but which made only slow progress in Germany, where the majority of the bishops and abbots, even as late as the sixteenth century, were chosen from noble families.<sup>28</sup>

Social preferences within the Church are against the fundamental principle of Christianity—the essential equality of all men in the sight of God. St. Benedict († 543) lays down very emphatically in his rule that no distinction of persons must be made in the monastery, since all are one in Christ, with Whom there is no respect of persons. Good works alone determine the excellence of a man, not his birth or position.<sup>29</sup>

The viewpoint of the Church with regard to this matter can also be obtained from a decretal of Gregory IX. It is directed against the cathedral chapter of Strassburg, which refused to accept a certain canon appointed by the Papal Legate, because the candidate was not of noble birth. Such practice, the chapter alleged, was

drals. Cf. *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes* II, 6-8. — Cf. also Aloys Schulte, *Der Adel und die deutsche Kirche im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1910), and by the same author, "Der hohe Adel im Leben des mittelalterlichen Köln," *MSB.*, phil.-hist. Kl. (1918), Abh. 8; A. J. Carlyle, *The influence of Christianity upon social and political ideas* (Oxford, 1911), 32 ff.; J. W. Thompson, *Feudal Germany*, 10 f.; J. Calmette, *Le monde féodal*, 254 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. A. Schulte, *Der Adel und die deutsche Kirche* 62. See also H. v. Eicken, *Geschichte und System der mittelalterlichen Weltanschauung*, 4th. ed. (Stuttgart u. Berlin, 1923), 547.

<sup>29</sup> "Non ab eo persona in monasterio discernatur. Non unus plus ametur quam alius, nisi quem in bonis actibus aut obedientia invenerit meliorem; non convertenti ex servitio praeponatur ingenuus, nisi alia rationabilis causa exsistat: quod si ita iustitia dictante abbati visum fuerit, et de cuiuslibet ordine id faciet; sin alias, propria teneant loca; quia sive servus sive liber, omnes in Christo unum sumus et sub uno Domino aequalem servitutis militiam baiulamus, quia non est apud Deum personarum acceptio." *S. Benedicti Regula Monachorum*, ed. by B. Linderbauer, O. S. B. (Metten, 1922), ch. II, p. 40.

against the prevailing custom. The decretal states very definitely that it is not nobility of birth but a virtuous life which makes the individual pleasing to God and fit for His service. Christ did not choose as His followers those who were powerful and noble according to the flesh, but the ignoble and the poor, because with Him there is no distinction of persons.<sup>30</sup> That both the regulations of the Church and St. Benedict's rule were nevertheless practically disregarded in the Middle Ages without any marked opposition from Church authorities must, no doubt, be attributed to a concession to unfavorable circumstances rather than to a denial of the accepted principle of human equality.

When St. Paul avers that all men are essentially the same in the sight of God, he does not mean that all have the same physical and intellectual abilities and are capable of the same physical, intellectual, and moral development. He does mean, however, that all are made for eternal happiness with God and that it is possible for each one to arrive at communion with Him by leading a virtuous life. What a complete revolution this meant will be clear if we recall that Aristotle believed in a profound inequality of mankind, by reason of which a servant, for example, was not strictly capable of leading a virtuous life.<sup>31</sup> It is true that both Cicero<sup>32</sup> and Seneca<sup>33</sup> recognized the intrinsic capacity of every human being for virtue.<sup>34</sup> But in Christian ethics, the concept of virtue itself receives a new significance due to its connection with grace.

Hugo brings out this distinction very clearly when he says:

Der mensche hât fünf dinc von nâtûre,  
Er si rîch, arm, herre oder gebûre:  
Schoene, sinne, sprâche, stimme und kraft:  
Das aber er werde *tugenthafft*,  
Kiusche, milte, dêmüetic und reine,

---

<sup>30</sup> "Nos igitur attendentes, quod non generis, sed virtutum nobilitas vitaeque honestas gratum Deo faciunt et idoneum servitorum, ad cuius regimen non multos secundum carnem nobiles et potentes elegit, sed ignobiles ac pauperes eo, quod non est personarum acceptio apud ipsum." *Corpus iuris canonici*, C. 37 X de praebendis III, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Politics* I, v, 7 ff. See also A. J. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, 16 ff.

<sup>32</sup> *De legibus* I, 10-12.

<sup>33</sup> *De beneficiis* III, 18-28.

<sup>34</sup> For the Jewish concept see above.

*Diu genåde gêt von gote alleine,*

*Der ziert mit tugenden unser leben* (6477 ff.)<sup>36</sup>

Grace is necessary for a man that he may be able to lead a virtuous life.

Wir bedürfen alle genâden wol (1050),

remarks Hugo. But man must cooperate with grace, for God does not force anyone. His grace, says Hugo, supplements our efforts and effects

Daz daz halbe würde ganz (7633),

for man alone is incapable of acquiring perfect virtue, or *ganze tugent*.<sup>36</sup> God is perfection and has commanded man to be perfect. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>37</sup> Thomasin evidently thinks of this command of Holy Scripture, when he says:

swer aver wil ze himel gân,  
der muoz die tugende haben *gar*, (6070 f.)

Then he goes on to explain how this perfection is to be understood:

er muoz si hân *gemeinliche*,  
mag ers ouch niht hân *genzliche*. (6073 f.)

God alone is absolutely perfect (6081 f.). With the help of God's grace, however, man may acquire a relative perfection (7654).

A virtuous life, though demanded of all men, is particularly necessary for the nobleman.<sup>38</sup> Through his position he is raised

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J. E. Pruner, *Lehrbuch der katholischen Moraltheologie*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg, 1883), 95; Fr. Götting, *Der Renner Hugos von Trimberg* 46; P. J. Landsberg, "Probleme der Gnadenlehre," *DVjschrLW*. 8 (1930), 375 f.

<sup>37</sup> Der werlde liebe sô *gar* uns trennet,  
Daz *ganze tugent* nieman bekennet. (1033 f.)

Freidank says:

Sô *ganze tugende* nieman hât  
ern müeze erkennen missetât. (54, 12 f.)

Cf. *Renner* 24203 f.

<sup>38</sup> *Matt.* V, 48.

<sup>39</sup> Hugo says:

Doch sül'n herren nâch tugenden trahen  
Vil mêre denne die, der wir niht ahten. (1051 f.)

Cf. also 1047 f., and *Wälsche Gast* 6250 ff.

above his fellowmen, who observe his actions and imitate his conduct. Since in the Middle Ages religion formed an integral part of life,<sup>39</sup> the man of noble birth was expected to be preeminently a Christian noble. Piety was assumed to be the foundation for his rule of life. The father's first precept to his son in the *Winsbecke* is:

Sun, minne reiniclfchen got, (2, 1);

and Freidank begins his collection with a couplet which gives the keynote of his entire work:

Swer gote dienet Æne wanc,  
deist aller wisheit anevanc. (1, 5 f.)<sup>40</sup>

The clergyman, Thomasin, appropriately goes into the subject of the nobleman's religious duty in detail, while Hugo enjoins on all the faithful the practice of the virtues of religion.

Besides the moral virtues which were required of the nobleman, Thomasin also speaks of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (7565 ff.). He, moreover, praises the obedience of Abraham (6052), the humility of Moses (6053), the patience of Job (6055), the sorrow of Phineas over the transgression of God's command (6056 f.), the chastity of Isaac (6059), the simplicity of Jacob (6061), Enoch's purity (6061), and the charity of Joseph (6063 f.). All these virtues lead to God, the *summum bonum*.

Contrary to the teaching of the Stoics, who considered virtue as the highest good, Thomasin, though he borrowed many of their thoughts, especially in his treatment of moral virtues, is careful to relate each virtue to God as its origin and end. He wishes to point out,

wie die tugende vliegent daz,  
daz man ze himel kommen sol. (5700 f.)

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<sup>39</sup> Friedrich Neumann observes: "Das gesamte Leben des Mittelalters wird in allen seinen Entfaltungen von der Religion als stärkster Lebensmacht durchdrungen, ist irgendwie mittelbar oder unmittelbar auf Gott bezogen — auch wenn dies Leben von Menschen gelebt wird, die nicht zu echter Religiosität veranlagt sind." — "Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur," *Neue Jahrb.* (1922), 392. Cf. E. Keyser, "Das Wesen des späten Mittelalters," *DVjschrLW.* 9 (1931), 385.

<sup>40</sup> "nulla est hominis sapientia nisi pietas, qua recte colitur verus Deus." St. Aug. *De civ. dei* XIV, 28, *CSEL.* 40 (2), 57.



Thus prudence, guided by the light of faith, directs the mind to judge rightly concerning all things which lead to eternal life.<sup>41</sup> Justice, together with charity, regulates man's duty to God and his intercourse with his fellowmen. It requires, above all, subjection to God's will and obedience to His commands.<sup>42</sup> Courage, or Christian fortitude, imparts spiritual strength in the face of special difficulties. Thomasin fully appreciates the courage of the martyrs and refers to the crusades as an opportunity for the nobleman to gain a martyr's crown.<sup>43</sup> But courage, he says, is necessary also to live a good Christian life and to fight against vice (11691 ff.). Temperance, or *mâze*, likewise directs the noble toward God and eternal life. By it he governs and moderates the pleasures of the senses, and foregoes such as do not tend toward the good of the soul.<sup>44</sup>

Thus virtue, which was to the Stoics the *summum bonum*, occupies a secondary place with the didactic writers. The supreme good of man consists in the eternal contemplation and love of God in the life to come. Only where God is the *summum bonum*, there is true morality, true greatness.<sup>45</sup> The virtues, the *honestum*, as well as the gifts of body and fortune, the *utile*, must be directed toward that end. For even the world and its goods are not bad in themselves. They are good or bad according to the use which is

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 8827 ff.; 8842 ff.; 9571 ff.; 9604 ff.; 9675 ff.; *Renner* 6113 ff.; 16269 f.

<sup>42</sup> Thomasin says:

gotes vorht sol sîn an disen dingen,  
daz man vater und muoter êre  
und sîn undertânen lère  
und daz man habe ouch die sinne  
daz man sîn genôzen minne  
und leiste sînes herrn gebot,  
daz ez nien sî wider got,  
und lebe mit sînn lantliuten wol. (12418 ff.);

cf. 12404 ff.; 12885 ff.; *Renner* 18649 ff.; 18273 f.; 18287 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Got hât uns materge geben  
daz wir mugen von disem leben  
hin zim nâch marteraere wis. (11679 ff.)

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Wälsche Gast* 9936 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 5712 ff.; *Freidank* 1, 17 f.

made of them.<sup>46</sup> The virtuous man alone will know how to use them profitably.<sup>47</sup>

The ideal nobleman is he who, favored by gifts of fortune, lives and acts in such wise as to gain both the approval of the world and the good pleasure of God. With this idea in mind, the father in the *Winsbecke* exhorts his son:

. . . rihte hie dīn leben alsō,  
daz dort dīn sēle wol gevar. (3, 6 f.)<sup>48</sup>

Freidank calls him a truly happy man who is able to please God and the world.<sup>49</sup> If, however, this is impossible, it is better to forego the good opinion of the world and to cling to God alone, for He does not ask a man

ob er der werlde hulde hât. (31, 21)

Hugo is slightly more ascetic. He emphasizes the approval of the world less strongly than the other writers. His ideal is to be *in* the world but not *of* it.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, he does not advocate *Welt-*

<sup>46</sup> Thomasin says:

guot und übel heizet wol  
daz uns werren unde helfen sol. (5917 f.)

“  
dem tugenthaftn ist zaller vrist  
guot daz dem boesen ist  
schade, (4365 ff.)

<sup>48</sup> There is nothing to suggest the idea of “Weltflucht” in the original poem. This was added by continuators, who saw only danger and temptation in the world.

“  
Swer got und die werlt kan  
behalten, derst ein saelic man. (31, 18 f.)

and:

Ein man sol lop und êre bejagen  
und got doch in dem herzen tragen. (93, 22 f.)

Fr. Neumann remarks: “Wie es möglich ist, die Seele dem *summum bonum* und der ‘Welt’ offen zu halten, dem gilt in der Tat neben Regeln der Lebensklugheit und Bekundungen über Glauben und Wissen die Spruchsammlung Freidanks.”—“Scholastik und mittelhochdeutsche Literatur,” *Neue Jahrb.* (1922), 398.

<sup>50</sup> He says:

Mit vil tugenden ist er geberlt  
Swer in der werlde ist âne werlt. (4947 f.)

and:

Swer nâch gotes minne wil werben,  
Der lâze die werlt in ime sterben; (17157 f.)

*flucht*, but believes that God may be served in every station of life.<sup>51</sup>

How intimately the idea of religion was linked with the concept of nobility is shown by the close connection between chivalry and Christian knighthood. The Latin word *miles*, which in classical Latin meant a soldier, specifically a footsoldier as contrasted with an *eques*,<sup>52</sup> received a new signification through Christian influence. St. Paul borrows the idea of a soldier when he speaks of the Christian fighting against vice. In his epistle to the Ephesians<sup>53</sup> he exhorts the faithful:

Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).

This passage of St. Paul became the model for Thomasin's *miles christianus*. Since *miles* had also acquired in the course of time the signification of "knight,"<sup>54</sup> the duties of the *miles christianus* became associated with those of chivalry or medieval knighthood.

The Church had christianized the spirit of chivalry, and the investiture of the knight was in part a religious ceremony. Hugo refers to it as such and appears to attribute to it a sacramental character.<sup>55</sup> The consecration of the knight was indeed surrounded

<sup>51</sup> Swer stæzer liebe gein gote wil walten,  
Der mac wol lîp und sêle behalten  
In ieglichem orden: (3273 ff.)

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Du Cange, s. v. *miles*. <sup>53</sup> Ch. VI, 11-18.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. G. Schnürer, *Kirche und Kultur im Mittelalter* II (Paderborn, 1926), 258; Ch. Seignobos, *The Feudal Régime* 27.

<sup>55</sup> Renner 22205 f.; cf. Fr. Götting, *op. cit.*, 41. On the knight's investiture, see F. Warre Cornish, *Chivalry* (London, 1911), 186 f.; Ch. Seignobos, *op. cit.*, 33 f.; G. Schnürer, *op. cit.*, II (Paderborn, 1926), 271 f.; E. F. Jacob, "The beginnings of medieval chivalry," *Chivalry*, ed. by E. Prestage (New York, 1928), 41 ff.

with very impressive rites, the symbolism of which resembled that of the sacraments. The vigil of arms, the strict fasts, the three nights spent in prayer in a lonely chapel, the white garment of the neophyte, the consecration of his sword before the altar,—all that reminded him that his life had to be spent in the service of the Church. To redress wrong, to protect the widows and orphans, to honor the Church and guard her rights, these were his special duties.

The didactic writers deplore the fact that the knights of their time had lost sight of their calling.

zwiu sit ir ze riter worden? (7770),

asks Thomasin. Truly, not to waste their time in sloth (7771 ff.), nor to indulge their unlawful appetites in unrestrained pleasures (7776 ff.), and thus dishonor the name and office of knighthood by their degenerate lives—but to protect the Church and the poor (7805), the widows and orphans (8675), to take part in the crusades (11381 ff.) and purge the land of heresy (12683 ff.).<sup>56</sup> But, Thomasin continues,

der riter ist vil lützel hiute  
die daz tuon: (7806 f.)

Hugo of Trimberg voices the same complaint.<sup>57</sup>

While worldly knighthood was thus degenerating, another knighthood of a spiritual nature was advocated by the didactic writers to remedy the evil of the time. The fight against vice was to be its principal aim. Thomasin says:

daz ist ritterschaft gar,  
swenn man der untugende schar  
ûf die erde bestriuwet nider  
und lât si niht ûf komen wider. (7447 ff.)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The Lateran council required of the princes to fight heresy. Cf. C. J. Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte* V, 881 f. Concerning the duties of the knight, see also the sermon of Alanus de Insulis, *ad milites*, Migne, *PL.* 210, 185 ff.

<sup>57</sup> Witwen, weisen und arme liute  
Verderbent ritter und herren hiute,  
Die billicher si beschirmen sölten, (6193 ff.)

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. Petersen, *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe* 62; G. Bebermeyer, "Die deutsche Dicht- und Bildkunst im Spätmittelalter," *DVjschrLW.* 7 (1929), 309.

In order to fight the enemy successfully, the knight must be properly arrayed for battle. Reason must carry the banner (7470); justice give the sword (7473); prudence furnish the shield (7475); safety, the gorget (7476); true faith, the helmet (7479 f.); confidence, the horse (7483); courage, the spurs (7487); chastity, the rein (7491); constancy, the saddle (7495); and humility, the spear (7498).<sup>59</sup> Thus equipped, the knight will be able to wage battle against vice and sin (7448 ff.) and attain eternal life (7528 ff.).<sup>60</sup> This spiritual fight, Thomasin says, is particularly incumbent upon him who is marked with the cross, the crusader.<sup>61</sup> Mastery over self requires so much time and strength that none may be spared for any fight which is less important.<sup>62</sup> Freidank says:

Swer mit im selbe z'aller ztt  
vihtet, dast ein herter strit. (113, 10 f.)

It may justly be said that the didactic writers pictured a combination of the ideals of the perfect nobleman and the ideal Christian. The new ideal of nobility, thus evolved, was based upon the relation of the soul to God, its creator. Made in the image of God, and raised through supernatural grace to the dignity of an adopted son of God, man attained in truth the divine descent which the Greeks laid down mythically as a requisite for nobility. Kinship with God must be maintained by a virtuous life, for which the assistance of grace is necessary. The battle of life is

<sup>59</sup> Besides St. Paul, *Eph.* VI, 10-18, cf. Heinrich Rückert, *Anmerkungen* 578, for other probable sources; also H. Teske, *op. cit.*, 210, and J. Petersen, *op. cit.*, 113 f.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. also Renner 22853 ff.

<sup>61</sup> swen Kristes zeichn gezeichnet hât,  
den sol ouch kriuzen sîn kriuze.  
er wil daz man sich alsô kriuze  
daz man sîm lîbe volge niht. (11624 ff.)

<sup>62</sup> er sol niht krenken sîne kraft  
mit deheiner andern vîentschaft.

*Wälsche Gast* 7749 f.

fought by the Christian knight for the sole end of reaching God, of winning His approval. Though Christian nobility draws its recruits from all classes of society, those in exalted positions are expected to be the most perfect in Christian virtue, as they are both leaders and models. To them belongs in a special manner the support and defence of religion, and the protection of the poor.

## CONCLUSION

The didactic writings which form the basis of this study are an expression of the character of the thirteenth century, a period of transition and change. They reflect the decline of nobility and the gradual rise of the middle class. At the beginning of the period, knighthood is at its best, and in *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* the chivalric view of nobility is dominant. The knight is the representative of a favored social class, and in his person are combined all the attributes which constitute perfect nobility: noble descent, sufficient property, and moral rectitude. His manners in social intercourse, the ease and courteousness of his bearing, are the index of his mental and moral caliber. The casual mention of moral nobility by the author of the *Winsbecke* seems to show that it was still viewed as inseparable from nobility of birth and called for no further comment on the part of the writer.

Thomasin of Zerclaere is the principal exponent of Christian nobility. His ideal nobleman is the Christian knight, noble by birth, yet nobler still by holiness, possessed of moral and Christian virtues, fighting for God and feudal lord, and constantly engaged in the strife against vice and self. While the author of the *Winsbecke* emphasizes more the aesthetic side of nobility, Thomasin stresses and deepens the spiritual content.

Freidank is more of a realist with a tendency toward the satiric. With him nobility becomes a matter of the will and consists above all in noble deeds. It is not the exclusive possession of a favored few but can be obtained by anyone, whether bond or free. Nobility of descent and moral nobility are here clearly dissociated for the first time. The noble man of Freidank is the virtuous man, whose nobility does not rest on titles and privileges, but on noble deeds, and whose will alone is sufficient to procure for him this kind of nobility.

Hugo of Trimberg, while professing the same attitude as Freidank, is nevertheless constantly harking back to the old chivalric ideal as expressed in the *Winsbecke*. He is the pronounced *laudator temporis acti*, and for him his own generation had no claim to nobility. The so-called nobles, who on account of their position

should possess the qualities of true nobility, were noble merely in name, and unworthy of their exalted position. There was no one as yet to take their place, since the middle class, evidently, was not ready to assume leadership.

The didactic writers look upon gradation in social rank as something necessary. Since God has created men unequal in character and talents, a natural division of society is thus provided. The writers indicate virtue as the proper origin of nobility, and affirm that it is the only stamp of true worth and the sole title to just preference. Titles and privileges must exist but they must be counterbalanced by corresponding duties. The author of the *Winsbecke* considers the nobility as the only class of any consequence. He is not disturbed by any social problems but is perfectly satisfied with conditions as they are.

Thomasin of Zerclaere is acquainted with Italian, Provençal, and German social life. He witnessed the havoc caused by the rise of the Italian city-state, noticed the extravagance of Provençal courtly customs, and spent a great part of his life among the German feudal aristocracy. He speaks for the Holy Roman Empire ruled by Pope and emperor. All secular rulers are directly responsible to God, from Whom they receive their power and authority. Thomasin writes with the purpose of bringing back nobility and clergy to their duties. He fears a collapse of the feudal system and strives to prevent it.

The pointed maxims of Freidank concern all classes of society. The author attacks numerous faults and shortcomings, especially of the clergy and nobility, and purports to give helpful advice on how to direct one's life so as to please both God and the world.

Hugo of Trimberg is out of sympathy with the life of the nobles. He charges them especially with pride and avarice. Like Freidank he is particularly opposed to the parvenu nobility and treats all upstarts with contempt and derision.

A superior class is clearly recognized and approved by the didactic writers. It is represented by the feudal aristocracy of the thirteenth century, but the terms by which the writers refer to it are neither clear nor well defined nor consistent. *Adel* and *edel*, *herre* and *êre* are used indiscriminately. Three reasons may account for such inconsistency: the transitional character of the period, the attitude



of the writers as moralists and preachers, and their promiscuous use of sources.

An important factor in the general trend of events is the increased political significance of the towns, testifying to the influence of commercial and industrial development. The traces of this movement center around the problem of wealth. The writers are unanimous in their rejection of a nobility of wealth. They concede its necessity for the proper exercise of noble virtues, but they fear its all-persuasive force and degrading mastery. Thomasin of Zerclaere is most apprehensive, but Freidank and Hugo are also greatly disturbed over the power of the penny. To avert the threatened collapse of society and to forestall the disrapture of the old social order, they remind the nobility and the clergy of their high obligation, enjoining especially the practice of those virtues to which the lives of the nobles were in marked contradiction.



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